University of Alberta

# Korean EFL Inservice Teachers' Experiences With Native-Speaking Teachers of EFL Using Two Computer-Mediated Communication Modes: A Qualitative Case Study

by

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## Background of the Study

The intent of this study was to understand how Korean English as a foreign language (EFL) inservice teachers perceive their experiences of computer-mediated communication (CMC) involving both asynchronous and synchronous communication.

Being a teacher, especially of EFL, requires many complex skills, knowledge, and a positive attitude toward teaching. In Korea the teacher is viewed as a 'treasure house' of knowledge, which requires EFL teachers to continuously study English-related areas such as linguistics, culture, new teaching and learning methods, and educational technology.

At the time that this study was conducted, students' English proficiency in elementary schools in Korea varied. Although there were some students whose English proficiencies were low, there were also very high-level students who could speak and write English so fluently that they had little problem in having conversations with native speakers of English. Some of the students who had achieved this level had lived experiences in countries where English was spoken as a primary language or had English learning experiences with native speakers of English from their childhood.

Teachers of English in Korea also had various English learning backgrounds. The English proficiency of some of them was similar to that of native speakers, but others' communicative competence was not good enough to allow them to have conversations with native English speakers. Some English teachers were often nervous when asked questions by the high-level students in English. In addition, at the time of this study, in elementary English classes the teachers were asked to use English only.

English teachers in Korean EFL situations rarely have the opportunity to interact with native English speaking people through face-to-face communication. They could possibly interact with native English speakers in private English institutes, but such factors as cost, time, and lack of confidence prevented them from using other means of interacting with native English speakers directly.

I have long been interested in effective ways through which EFL teachers can expand their knowledge of English. I believed that the best way to expand one's knowledge of English was to immerse oneself in the target language by, for example, living in English-speaking countries. In reality, it is not easy for EFL teachers living in a foreign country to gain this kind of experience; therefore I believed that they must seek alternative ways of increasing their knowledge of English. From my experiences of learning English and using CMC, I began to believe that CMC might be one way, and I began to read studies on CMC for both nonnative and native English speakers, especially in English as a second language (ESL) and EFL contexts. CMC includes asynchronous communication (i.e., electronic mail, listservs, threaded forums, electronic bulletin boards), in which communication turnaround may be delayed for hours or days; and synchronous communication using a computer (i.e., network videoconferencing, electronic chat), in which participants interact in real time.

My interests prompted me to review studies related to CMC and second-language acquisition. The research literature in which I read about CMC use for ESL/EFL reported various strong benefits in terms of the improvement of CMC users' English proficiency. However, it must be pointed out that despite all of the benefits that researchers have claimed for CMC, I tend to agree with Nunan's (1999) conclusion that "distance learning, whether supported by Web-based instruction or not, is second best to the opportunities provided by face-to-face instruction" (p. 71) in a real context. Nunan investigated the potential of synchronous interaction among graduate students using the Web. He compared face-to-face interaction and concluded that CMC should have disadvantages resulting from the lack of a real context.

The tool of interaction for communication can be varied according to the situation. In the case of EFL, how is CMC suitable? It prompted me to review other studies on the use of CMC, especially in EFL contexts. The first one was the suitability of CMC use compared to face-to-face interaction, and the second was the trend of increasing CMC use.

The first literature that I found was on the suitability of CMC use for the EFL context compared to face-to-face interaction for learning English as a foreign language. The opportunities provided by synchronous CMC such as e-chat (interaction occurs at the

same time) and asynchronous CMC such as e-mail (interaction occurs at different times) between people in the communicating process means that EFL learners are able to engage in collaborative learning with one another in a way similar to that enjoyed by students in face-to-face teaching situations in terms of audience presence, input, feedback, and output (Freiermuth, 2001; Hawkes & Romiszowski, 2001; Murray, 2001; Nunan, 1999). All of these researchers agreed that the CMC environment promotes interactions in less controlled learning situations, which contributes to collaborative learning.

Discussing one of the alternative ways to learn English in terms of interactions with native English speaking people in EFL contexts, Murray and Bollinger (2000) indicated that the various types of CMC have become important conversational modes similar to face-to-face and telephone communication and handwritten notes. Language users decide on a convenient way of communication based on the context, and the choice depends on the language users' contexts such as time, space, topic, audience characteristics, and setting.

I believed that Korean English educators needed to take a careful look at EFL learning situations because various differences exist between face-to-face interaction and CMC in terms of the effectiveness of communication. Murray and Bollinger (2000) pointed out that each has its own advantages and disadvantages and that no technology is neutral or value free. They went on to say that face-to-face interaction is the best type in terms of effective communication, whereas the "telephone amplifies the voice, overcoming a geographical distance, even though reducing nonverbal cues such as gesture and intonation" (p. 406). In this way the telephone is very useful in daily life. Interpersonal interaction is one of the most essential factors in foreign language acquisition, as Ellis (1999) pointed out. Although this view was not controversial, Korean learners of English as a foreign language had obvious difficulties such as geographical distance and lack of opportunity to communicate with native English speakers. Thus, telecommunications allow EFL learners to use authentic acts of communication that involve one-to-one or one-to-multiple interactions (i.e., one lecturer's interaction with several students).

The second literature I found was on the current trend of increasing CMC use. In the electronic environment, Bell and Gray (1997) stated, "by 2047 . . . all information

about physical objects, including humans, buildings, processes and organizations, will be on-line. This is both desirable and inevitable" (p. 5). For example, the physical structure of schools as we know them now may exist online. Cerf (1997) also concurred and expected that with information, "like electrical power, it is assumed to be available whenever and wherever needed" (p. 33). As to the distinct advantages of CMC as resources available in EFL contexts, Sussex and White (1996) noted when recommending the use of CMC in teacher education that CMC allows for the creation of cyberspace, where communication can occur "in the same geographical and physical places at different times, in different geographical and physical places at the same time, or in different geographical and physical places at different times" (p. 201). That is, EFL learners living in places distant from native English speaking countries are expected to benefit by using CMC.

However, I have found little evidence that inservice teacher research has been undertaken in a CMC context, which prompted me to explore Korean EFL inservice teachers' experiences of CMC (both asynchronous and synchronous) to understand how they perceive their experiences in terms of the benefits and difficulties of CMC, and to obtain their suggestions for a pedagogical use of CMC with their students. I believed that in order to determine whether a certain teaching or learning tool was pedagogically useful in a teaching and learning situation, teachers' perceptions should be explored through research.

Therefore, given that there was a growing recognition of CMC as a useful way for EFL learners to interact with native speakers, and given that educators wanted to understand their students' experiences, I felt that it would be helpful for the teachers themselves to experience CMC. Furthermore, because learners' participation in CMC was expected to increase in the future, EFL teachers need to understand CMC, both for the learners and for themselves (Murray & Bollinger, 2000). An effective way of understanding the significance of CMC might be explored by studying EFL teachers' own participation in CMC. The fact that nonnative English speaking teachers in EFL contexts have less opportunity for exposure to English input and output than do those in ESL contexts makes CMC important for English language acquisition.

Therefore, I assumed that this experience would be especially necessary for Korean EFL teachers for them to explore the benefits and difficulties of the technology that had been applied to elementary schools, high schools, universities, and even teacher education. Furthermore, I also believed that CMC was a way of overcoming geographical, economic, and time difficulties; hence, teachers' direct involvement in it would assist them in exploring how to be highly effective teachers (Denning, 1997).

It should be clarified that even though the participants in the study were three Korean EFL inservice teachers and three native English speaking teachers of EFL, the main research focus was on Korean participants' experiences.

**Biographical Reflection**

During my own experience with CMC (Lee, 2000), there have been times when I have expressed concern about the superficial interaction of this form of communication and interaction. From May to July 1999 I conducted a study with Korean elementary school students who were corresponding with native speakers of English in several countries, such as Australia, USA, and Canada, using e-mail and e-chat exchanges. The participants were encouraged to seek their native English speaking partners by themselves through e-mail and e-chat programs and to correspond with them. The participants were not assigned any specific task other than continued communication, and the purpose of the research was to seek evidence of the benefits of CMC, especially of its impact on students' improvement in English reading and writing proficiency. During the first stage of conducting the e-mail exchange, as their teacher I also contacted students in foreign countries by using Internet websites and the online e-chatting program ICQ.[1] The participants corresponded with each other using both e-chat and e-mail programs. When my students first received their partners' e-mail, they were very excited and told me that they felt as though they had suddenly become international citizens by communicating with people from around the world.

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[1] ICQ is a homophonic spelling that represents "I seek you"; it is one of the most popular programs in electronic synchronous CMC. ICQ was considered to be a powerful chatting program with diverse functions, such as transmitting pictures, saving discourse messages, sending instant notices as to transmission, and searching chatting partners randomly (who were categorized into several kinds of groups such as students, teachers, adults, men, women, group).

During this stage my students were very proud of their e-mail communications with foreigners and prepared one-page compositions with assistance from their fathers, mothers, elder brothers, other teachers, or myself. Before sending e-mails to their partners, my students wanted to check for grammatical or semantic errors. They waited eagerly for their partners' replies, but these were very disappointing because the messages were very short, the longest being three or four lines. In their next e-mails my students also wrote short messages that included brief comments about their families, relatives, weather, hobbies, and school lives. In reality, many of the students had already lost their motivation to exchange e-mail messages and were interacting superficially. Some students were just playing a "number game," asking and answering questions about the number of people in their families, listing their hobbies, and describing their pets. However, I found several strategies to encourage them to interact meaningfully by using online, real-time communication with one another. For example, I recommended that the students have group discussions about each partner's school life, family, hobbies, culture, useful expressions, and other topics. They copied down whatever expressions they thought would be useful for their next communication. Some of the students sent postcards and photos of themselves or their families through the e-chatting program, as well as through e-mail attached documents. These seemed to encourage their partners to send longer replies, and my students began to understand the different motivations between EFL students and native English speaking people when using English.

Even with the students' disappointments and difficulties, the results of the study, which were quantitatively analyzed and compared to a control group, showed that real-time conversation and e-mail on the Internet in the elementary English class offered a statistically significant improvement in English reading comprehension and translation abilities based on a pretest and a posttest. There was also a significant improvement in the students' attitude towards second language learning. It was therefore suggested that more research on the improvement of English communicative ability using Internet real-time conversation be conducted in an EFL context. From this study I realized that CMC had both benefits and difficulties for EFL students in terms of a pedagogical use of CMC.

Regardless of the aforementioned research, from my personal experiences as a Korean English teacher and my experiences of exchanging synchronous and

asynchronous online communication, I believe that I benefited a great deal at the time in several areas. These areas included an increase in my confidence in my English-writing proficiency and in my awareness of English-speaking cultures. For example, whenever I had trouble expressing my opinion when using difficult words at the first stage, I normally used the Yahoo dictionary. But later on I could ask the native English speaker directly about the words without using a dictionary. However, although I enjoyed online communication and recognized the benefits of using this useful communication tool, my teaching colleagues at the time were not willing to do so. Their reasons for not communicating online included a lack of confidence, shortage of time, lack of motivation, and little knowledge of the possible benefits of online communication. I have come to believe that when EFL teachers as teaching professionals in elementary schools use online communication with native English speakers, they can benefit from sharing common interests such as their perceptions of education, difficulties in the classroom, different cultural aspects, and lived oral expressions that are essential in their classroom activities.

Simply put, I think I have benefited from my CMC experiences as an English teacher in an EFL context, and I also think other EFL teachers may benefit from their CMC experience if they are really engaged in it. However, my colleagues were not eagerly involved in CMC with native English speakers. People often think that they understand something before they actually experience it, but they have to recognize that they may misunderstand something that they think they already know. Judging Korean inservice teachers' understanding of the possible benefits and difficulties of using CMC from the results of research in which the participants are students may not be reasonable because teachers and students are in different situations in terms of time, motivations, beliefs, and attitudes toward CMC. Accordingly, I was very curious about what kind of discussions would take place among the participants and what would make them actively join the discussions. Would they benefit from their online conversations by discussing their specific teaching techniques and personal pedagogical perspectives? In short, if there are other alternative ways for EFL teachers to interact with native speakers of English, these should be explored for themselves and for their students.

## Assumptions

I assumed from my experiences of learning English and using CMC that online CMC, especially through the interactions of EFL inservice teachers with native English speaking teachers, would have both benefits and difficulties.

I assumed that all of the respondents in the study would provide true information about their perspectives and their experiences of CMC use, as well as their daily life stories relating to the study.

I assumed that all of the participants would believe that they were secure that their anonymity would be protected and that they recognized well about the ethical information which was informed by a researcher before they agreed to participate in the study.

## Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study was to use a social constructivist approach to try to understand Korean EFL inservice teachers' experiences of CMC involving both asynchronous and synchronous communication. These were mainly text-based communication modes, with some photograph-based modes, with a focus on CMC's benefits (i.e., increased confidence in speaking and writing English, increased authentic English cultural knowledge) and difficulties (i.e., lack of time, difficulties in solving information gaps, technology problems). Under the constructivist paradigm and interpretive research, I sought to understand the participants' experiences, which were culturally and socially constructed in a given situation. To advance my understanding of Korean EFL inservice teachers' CMC experiences, I endeavored to describe and interpret their experiences both in depth and broadly.

## Research Questions

The overall question guiding this research was, What was the CMC experience for Korean nonnative English speaking inservice teachers corresponding with native English speaking teachers as they used both asynchronous and synchronous electronic communication? This led to three subquestions:

1. What benefits of CMC would Korean inservice English teachers experience as both teachers and learners through online communication with native English speakers?
2. What would be the difficulties faced by Korean inservice English teachers when corresponding with native English speakers?
3. What pedagogical suggestions for CMC use would Korean inservice English teachers give to other Korean EFL teachers?

As the research was conducted, other questions were expected to emerge that I would incorporate into the aforementioned questions.

## Delimitations and Limitations

The research study was delimited to three Korean inservice English teachers working in the same elementary school district in a metropolitan city. The study was also delimited to the three native-speaking teachers of EFL who worked in schools in Korea.

The findings of my research were limited by the specific context, my ability to interpret the participants' constructed meanings of CMC experiences, and the three participants' interactions with the three native English speakers in a bounded context. Another limitation was the period of research, which was approximately six calendar months during the 2003 and 2004 school year.

## Significance

If the results of the Korean participants' experiences with CMC are meaningful, this study may help other Korean EFL teachers as both teachers and learners to understand an alternative way of learning and teaching English. As well, this study will contribute to furthering our understandings of the nature of CMC and its benefits to foreign language teachers. By understanding the process and the results of this study and its precise description of CMC's benefits and difficulties, other Korean EFL teachers will gain insight into CMC use in terms of how to better organize their CMC experience during correspondence with native English speakers from the beginning stages.

The second contribution of this study may be to teacher educators and EFL curriculum developers. By exploring Korean EFL teachers' direct experiences of CMC,

this study will provide teacher educators with understandings of CMC in a teacher education program for EFL inservice teachers' lifelong self-development.

The third contribution of this study may be to the native English speaking teachers who work in various schools from elementary to university level in Korea. Because of Korea's English education policy, the number of native English speaking teachers has increased every year. If the findings of this study are meaningful to them, they may gain some insight into the benefits and difficulties of the native English speaking participants' CMC experiences.

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

A definition of CMC, the need for its use, and the literature that supports CMC use in an EFL environment are identified in this section. The first part reviews the studies on constructivism in relation to CMC. The second part reviews the studies on the theoretical support for CMC in relation to the second/foreign language acquisition theory that have suggested expanding research on CMC, including interaction, negotiation of meaning and collaborative learning, authentic language experiences, and authentic writing experiences. The third part explores studies on the various benefits of CMC in relation to second-culture acquisition, and CMC will be compared to face-to-face interaction. The fourth part summarizes the studies connecting nonlanguage factors in relation to CMC, and the final part reviews the studies on EFL teacher development in relation to CMC, with a summary of the literature on preservice teacher education and CMC, including the use of CMC in teaching English as a second language. I did not find a great of research on EFL inservice teachers' use of CMC.

## Defining CMC

In the rapidly changing field of CMC, it has many different definitions. Simpson (2002) defined *CMC* as "an umbrella term, which refers to human communication via computer" (p. 414). Simpson explained two modes of CMC: Synchronous CMC includes various types of text-based online e-chat, computer, audio, and video conferencing; asynchronous CMC encompasses e-mail, discussion forums, and mailing lists. Santoro (1995) defined CMC as "the use of computer systems and networks for the transfer, storage, and retrieval of information among humans" (p. 11). He emphasized the nature of communication in defining CMC and stressed that two-way interpersonal interaction is an important component of CMC.

Berge and Collins (1995) supported Santoro's (1995) definition and emphasized the human use and role of communication. They sorted CMC into three categories: for conferencing, informatics, and computer-assisted instruction. Computer conferencing

includes e-mail, interactive messaging, and interpersonal discussion through a computer; informatics includes library online public-access catalogs, remote databases, and archive sites; computer-assisted instruction includes the presentation of information using a computer. Although CMC is defined widely in Berge and Collins' three categories, in this research I will use their first concept, conferencing, with text-, audio-, or video-based CMC, which includes asynchronous or synchronous communication mediated by computer. Conferencing requires a speaker, a listener, and mutual feedback among specified people, rather than unspecified such as in the case of Internet homepages.

## Definitions of ESL and EFL

Gass and Selinker (2001) offered definitions generally accepted in this field that separate foreign language learning from second language learning:

> Foreign language learning refers to the learning of a nonnative language in the environment of one's native language (e.g. , French speakers learning English in France or Spanish speakers learning French in Spain, Argentina, or Mexico.) Second language acquisition, on the other hand, generally refers to the learning of a nonnative language in the environment in which that language is spoken (e.g. , German speakers learning Japanese in Japan or Punjabi speakers learning English in the United Kingdom). (p. 5)

These authors emphasized the environment in distinguishing ESL and EFL, in which second-language learners have considerable access to speakers of the target language being learned, whereas foreign-language learners do not.

Brown (2000) explained that ESL refers to English within a culture in which English is spoken natively; EFL refers to "English in one's own culture with few immediate opportunities to use the language within the environment of that culture" (p. 193). Furthermore, Brown pointed out that distinguishing between the two is sometimes difficult. For example, when immigrant communities establish themselves within native English speaking countries, the dominant community language is often their own indigenous tongue rather than English; for example, in Canada, Chinese-speaking children who live in Chinese-speaking communities within an English-speaking culture. In this study, in the context of Korea, EFL means the learning of English in the environment of one's native language, as suggested by Gass and Selinker (2001).

## Social Constructivism in Relation to CMC

In the current field of language learning, social constructivism has emerged as an orientation to learning that focuses on the meaning-making process. "Constructivism is a theory about learning" (Fosnot, 1996, p. 29). "Constructivism stems from the burgeoning field of cognitive science, and particularly the later work of Jean Piaget and the sociohistorical work of Lev Vygotsky, among others who have studied the role of representation in learning" (p. 11). Ewing, Dowling, and Coutts (1998) also agreed with this point: "Two of the most influential contributors to modern thinking about constructivism are Piaget and Vygotsky" (p. 7). These authors further explained that Piaget's work emphasized a cognitive and individualistic perspective on learning, whereas Vygotsky used a sociocultural approach. Vygotsky (1962) emphasized an interpersonal interaction between learners, especially with advanced peers or adults, in order for them to reach the level of desired learning with assistance. These concepts of learning also apply to ESL/EFL learning through a collaborative process.

The concept of collaborative learning is based on Vygotsky's (1978) definition of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which means "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Schinke-Llano (1995) asserted that dialectic conversation with native speakers facilitates learners' ability to use a target language in terms of socially and culturally appropriate use of the language within the ZPD, which is created by dialogic activities. Ellis (1999) elaborated on the concept of ZPD and identified three types of goals based on Vygotsky's metaphor of ZPD: "(1) goals that the learner can meet without assistance, (2) goals that are completely beyond the learner even if given assistance, and (3) goals that the learner can perform if he/she has access to mediational assistance" (p. 20). Ellis explained that the ZPD lies between an area of the learner's actual development level achieved alone and an area of nondevelopment achieved alone, through mediation, which is in the form of social interaction.

Sociocultural constructivism in connection with CMC is discussed in this section. The sociocultural constructivist emphasizes social interactions with advanced peers or

teachers in a specific cultural context that enable learners to share their experiences. John-Steiner and Meehan (1996) suggested that sharing mutual experiences or ideas is crucial in the learning process, because it contributes to "clarification and reorganization in their own thinking" (p. 35) through dialectical questions and response, which leads to new concepts. Two-way interpersonal dialectic interaction is a more powerful way of learning, because whereas one-way thinking is based on prediction, two-way interaction enables learners to co-construct meaning in a particular conversation (Wells, 1999).

Wells (1999) also stated that two-way interpersonal dialectic interaction prompts and accelerates the learning process within a specific social interactive event and that, through requesting clarification, explanation, and elaboration, learners are required to encounter conflict, reordering, and hypothesis making, which results in the creation of new concepts. "This is the process of formation of the learners" (p. 18). Third, interpersonal interaction is more dynamic than interaction with objects in the world because instantiated, constant meaning feedback (mutual exchange) prompts learners to create new concepts. Furthermore, Wells emphasized two criteria for better conditions in order for interpersonal interaction to be more effective than static interaction with objects in the world: the crucial role of collaboration and "a task that is necessary and relevant for life" (p. 25).

Ewing et al. (1998) summarized Vygotsky's social constructivism and its approach to CMC based on six principal features: (a) Learning is context based, (b) conceptual learning is through active involvement, (c) learning is through collaboration with others, (d) the learner should have personal autonomy and control over learning, (e) learning is personal growth, and (f) learning outcome is a perspective and an understanding. These authors specified the application of constructivism to CMC, respectively (a) making links with existing knowledge in the context of real life experiences, (b) deriving learner's own interpretations, (c) sharing existing knowledge with others, (d) making personal decisions and their own goals, (e) requiring personal reflection on progress, and (f) constructing unique knowledge through requests and suggestions on how to resolve problems. Although isolated individuals can also engage in reflective thinking, it has been generally recognized that social interaction better facilitates our reflective thinking. In this sense, constructivists argue that knowledge is

constructed with the learner's active participation and emphasize the social nature of learning (Phillips, 1995).

On the characteristics of CMC in relation to constructivism, Weasenforth, Biesenbach-Lucas, and Meloni (2002) synthesized Ewing et al.'s (1998) six principal features into four: collaborative construction of knowledge, contextualized authentic tasks, less controlled environments, and thoughtful interaction. They agreed that the additional processing time provided by asynchronous CMC is particularly important because nonnative speakers can improve their critical thinking skills at their own pace.

With asynchronous communication such as e-mail and electronic bulletin boards, students have time to reflect, control their pace of learning in a relatively free environment, overcome time-zone differences, and share their perspectives with their partners. Commenting on the unique advantage of asynchronous bulletin board, Carey (2000) stated as follows:

> What is unique to activity on the interactive electronic bulletin board as apposed to interaction in a live seminar is that each student can individually control the speed of processing for their input and each individual word can be interpreted and then reinterpreted as one reads subsequent words which modify the context and appropriate meaning of the previous word(s) as the students progresses at their individual speed. Further, the meaning of unknown second language words can be approximated, guessed at or researched in a dictionary at the individual student's speed and in terms of lexical and semantic knowledge as well as prior knowledge of each individual. (p. 9)

With asynchronous communication, students cannot hear vocalized sound, receive social contextual clues such as facial expressions, or experience the nonverbal expressions that are possible in face-to-face conversation. Nevertheless, participants in CMC have real audiences who are waiting for their messages and are expected to respond to them. Despite the disadvantages of CMC compared to face-to-face interaction, the advantages of CMC in relation to the social aspects of learning and cognitive and affective principles provide students with opportunities to produce a context-appropriate language. This context allows learners to recognize and analyze texts and to reflect by themselves while they interact with their partners.

In research dealing with Web-based e-chatting, a synchronous CMC mode, Nunan (1999) concluded that Web-based e-chatting could be used to promote constructivist,

student-centered, and collaborative learning. In a recent study comparing face-to-face to Web-based discussion through both quantitative and qualitative analysis with TESOL students' participation, Kamhi-Stein (2000) supported Nunan's conclusion that as the CMC progressed, students took greater control of their interactions. Through e-chatting interactions, the students were able to make connections between their work experiences and the knowledge presented in the textbooks "as their ideas evolve in real time across different educational and cultural contexts" (p. 425). The results of the study show that electronic discussion might allow students to construct knowledge as "a social rather than an individual activity," (p. 430) because in interviews the students felt that Web-based discussion reduced the social distance between them and their instructor by increasing their social interactions. Kamhi-Stein emphasized the advantages of CMC, and especially the students' responsibility to maintain their conversation, support each other, and make connections between new and previously presented information.

Even with the aforementioned disadvantages of CMC, such as the absence of nonverbal cues that are important factors in communication (Huang, 1998; Tiene, 2000), the literature reviewed showed a number of benefits of CMC when used by EFL learners. Sehlaoui (2001), Haung, and Tiene pointed out that the nature of CMC interactions provided preservice participants with opportunities to learn about their peers' field experiences and to share their own experiences. Kamhi-Stein (2000) stated that when student teachers shared their daily professional experiences, they focused on themes that could lead to reflective thinking. The interpersonal interaction through CMC allows these students to cross international borders with collaborative work so that they actively construct knowledge by formulating ideas, sharing them with others, and changing them according to others' reactions and responses (Ewing et al., 1998). Ewing et al. believed that collaboration allows learners to exchange views with distant partners who are all over the world and whose perspectives might differ dramatically from their own.

## Second/Foreign Language Acquisition in Relation to CMC

When second-language acquisition in relation to CMC is considered, it should be noted that in the research with nonnative speaking teachers of a target language using CMC, the participants have ranged from elementary to preservice to inservice EFL

teachers. During the review of the studies, I found many interrelated facets of CMC and second/foreign-language learning.

Liu, Moore, Graham, and Lee (2002) summarized studies on computer-assisted language learning and foreign language learning from 1990 to 2000, inclusive. The authors reviewed the studies to gain an understanding of how computers have been used in the past 11 years to support second- and foreign-language learning and to explore evidence on how computer technology can enhance acquisition of language skills. A total of 21 journals and 246 articles were selected, and the primary sources were refereed printed-based journals and ERIC documents. They did not include doctoral dissertations, master's reports, nonrefereed articles, and abstracts. Liu et al. regarded the study of computer use to support second- and foreign-language learning as very important if we are to understand the potential of computer technology for language learning. Their review included studies of software tools, such as multimedia authoring software, word processing software, speech recognition software, CMC, and the Internet.

Liu et al. (2002) concluded that the researchers and educators in the literature that they reviewed concurred that computer-assisted language learning can be an effective instructional tool, and CMC has been recognized as a highly effective tool in learning and teaching second or foreign languages in terms of collaborative, meaningful, and cross-cultural interactions.

Liu et al. (2002) also suggested that more research be conducted at the K-12 level, because the majority of the studies reviewed were at the college level. They also found that although there was little strong evidence that computer technology could improve specific language skills (i.e., improvement of students' knowledge in grammatical features), the majority of the studies reviewed showed positive results in the use of technology in language learning. In Liu et al.'s review, the main focus of CMC studies relating to second- or foreign-language learning was meaningful conversation, equal participation, realistic communications because of its real topics, critical thinking, reading and writing skills, and participants' positive perceptions. CMC has been uniquely emphasized as one of the most effective language-learning media, and Liu et al. concluded that "advocates claim that CMC can be an excellent medium for cultivating new social relationships within or across classrooms, resulting in collaborative,

meaningful, and cross-cultural human interactions among members of a discourse community created in cyberspace" (p. 252). The intersection of CMC and the field of EFL acquisition research addresses other areas that also come into play: interaction, negotiation of meaning, authentic language experience, and authentic writing experience.

The first benefit of CMC is that it provides interactions among language learners. The distinctive characteristic of CMC in terms of the language-learning process is the function of interpersonal interaction, which is a core concept in second/foreign-language learning. "In recent years, the synergy created by the marriage of computer networks and second/foreign language instruction has brought a whole new perspective to the acquisition of communicative competence" (Liaw, 1996, p. 5) in a second language environment, although Brown (1994) clearly stated that "we cannot identify orthodoxy in the field of second language acquisition—a standard model or theory to which large numbers of researchers and teachers predominantly subscribe" (p. 275) Second language educators and theorists commonly agreed that interpersonal interaction is crucial in the second language learning process (Chapelle, 2001; Gass & Selinker, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 1995; Schinke-Llano, 1995). Cameron (1989) also asserted that the crucial factor of CMC relating to second-/foreign-language learning is to provide language learners with valuable interpersonal interactions with native English speakers.

Cameron (1989) commented that interpersonal interaction affords learners the opportunities of interpreting and conveying meaning, utilizing the target language, getting practice, and prompting meaning negotiation. Other important factors in the second language learning process, such as input and output, can be understood in relation to interactions with native speakers. The concepts of input and output through interactions between or among human beings are not identical to those in computer information processing, because the former requires complex and dynamic negotiation of meaning. The second-/foreign-language learning literature refers to how learners take in and process the new language and, subsequently, how they use it.

Regarding the importance of interaction in language learning in relation to CMC, Schacter and Fagnano (1999) drew on sociocultural learning theory in second language acquisition. Interaction drives learners to

> discuss each other's ideas, opinions, and beliefs. During these interactions, conflict may occur. That conflict, in turn, may drive the child to question his or her beliefs and to seek and generate alternative explanations to help reshape his or her understanding. (p. 333)

These authors added that learners can build on each other's ideas through conflict and giving and receiving explanations. Learning language is impossible without building concepts being signified by the language. Thus, the concepts of the language can be built effectively by interpersonal interaction.

Pica (1994) asserted that "even though, presumably the learners have been given large amounts of comprehensible input, this is not sufficient for the learning. . . . They might need to be given opportunities to produce comprehensible output, that is, to organize and restructure their output" (p. 501). Regarding the importance of opportunities for interaction, Pica further claimed that successful second-language learning requires learners' production of output and their comprehension of message meaning through interactions.

Brown (1993) identified the crucial role of interaction in language acquisition:

> In fact, interaction is the heart of communication: it is what communication is all about. We send messages; we receive them; we interpret them in a context; we negotiate meanings; and we collaborate to accomplish certain purposes. . . . Interaction is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other. Theories of communicative competence emphasize the importance of interaction as human beings use language in various contexts to negotiate meaning, or simply stated, to get one idea out of your head and into the head of another person and vice versa. (p. 159)

In terms of the nature of interaction, Alvarez-Torres (2001) pointed out that CMC allows ESL/EFL learners to use the target language and to interact with classmates or learners in the world and with native speakers worldwide. Beauvois (1998) supported Alvarez-Torres's view and asserted that CMC provides learners with opportunities for responses, questions, and thoughts on the evolving electronic conversation, which are key concepts in language learning. They examined pedagogical applications to CMC in ESL/EFL acquisition and concluded that CMC can contribute to language acquisition because it provides language learners with interpersonal interaction in which the learners use communication strategies that prompt cognitive and affective language-learning

development. Canale (1983)'s definition of strategic competence is, as one of four competences in his model of communicative competence, "mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action for two main reasons: (a) to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to limiting conditions in actual communication (e.g. momentary inability to recall an idea or grammatical form) or to insufficient competence in one or more of the other areas of communicative competence; and (b) to enhance the effectiveness of communication" (p. 11).

Communication strategy refers to the method of meaning negotiation between people to overcome communication breakdowns. Alvarez-Torres explained the use of communication strategies in face-to-face situations: "If communication breaks down, learners tend to interrupt one another, seeking clarification, confirmation of the message content, or simply repetition-features known as interactional modification" (p. 314). Brown (1994) defined *communication strategies* as "elements of an overall strategic competence in which learners send clear messages in the second language" (p. 118). Even though CMC may not fully provide contextual cues such as facial expression and body language, there may be applications of these to the e-chat environment that are similar to the face-to-face examples. The next section discusses the core concept of interpersonal interaction—negotiation of meaning.

The second set of CMC benefits involves collaboration through negotiation, which is generally described as "a process of willing cooperation with peers and colleagues to reach educational objectives" (Hawkes & Romiszowski, 2001, p. 287). Collaborative learning occurs "when learners are encouraged to achieve common learning goals by working together rather than with the teacher and when they demonstrate that they value and respect each other's language input" (Macaro, 1997, p. 134). Studies investigating the effects of CMC have shown that the use of online discussion fosters CMC users' communication skills and effective meaning negotiation through exchanging ideas by helping each other to achieve mutual understanding in the target language (Kitade, 2000; Lee, 2002; Nunan, 1999). In other words, students were engaged in expressing their ideas, elaborating or articulating their thoughts, exchanging or debating their issues, querying information, and, depending on their opinions, using

various communication skills such as comprehension and confirmation checks in the target language.

Referring to negotiation of meanings as a type of interaction, Pica (1994) explained that in the field of second-language acquisition, the term *negotiation* "has been used to characterize the modification and restructuring of interaction that occurs when learners and their interlocutors anticipate, perceive, or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility" (p. 494). That is, negotiation leads to comprehensibility of others' message meaning, conveying one's meaning by making input comprehensible to language learners and providing them with opportunities to modify their output, which also facilitate the process of their negotiation of meaning.

A third benefit of CMC is that it provides students with authentic language experiences. Chapelle (2001) defined *authenticity of language* use as "the degree of correspondence between a second language learning task and tasks that the learner is likely to encounter" (p. 57) outside the context in which the language is being used. For example, authentic teaching or learning materials in English classes in EFL/ESL environments need to be culturally contextualized and may possibly be used in countries where English is spoken natively. Silva, Meagher, Valenzuela, and Crenshaw (1996), in presenting an overview of e-mail exchange with native English speaking high school students in a foreign language learning environment, emphasized that e-mail exchange provided the participants with an authentic language experience and allowed them to develop empathy with their peers in other cultures. Silva et al. recommended the use of e-mail in foreign language learning environments and commented that foreign language learners' use of the target language provides them with opportunities to organize their thoughts by comparing the ways that native speakers use authentic language.

Cifuentes and Shih (2001) studied the benefits of online communication using Taiwanese university-level students' e-mail exchanges with American university students. Using ethnographic methods, they found the use of authentic language to be the main benefit of e-mail. Cifuentes and Shih also found that the students compared native speakers' ways of using English to their own ways; hence they came to know how to organize words and phrases, which words are proper in certain expressions, and how to express themselves effectively. The students learned better ways of expression that

"would not be available in the typical class setting" (p. 461). That is, individualized or learner-centered interpersonal interactions with native speakers of the target language may provide valuable authentic ways of using the language. This is in the same vein as the concept of authentic communication. Carey (2002a) pointed out that for the purposes of promoting second-language acquisition, language learners should be provided with opportunities "to talk with who they want, when they want on the topic they want" (p. 51).

Several researchers studied the relationship between CMC and second language writing proficiency and found that CMC provides opportunities for students to compose under conditions in which they have a real audience, little time pressure, self-controlled text length, and free choice of topics (Besnard, Elkabas, & Rosienski-Pellerin, 1996; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2000; Gonzalez-Bueno & Perez, 2000; Lam, 2000; Stock, 1998; Weiserbs, 2001). For instance, using asynchronous electronic mail and word processing in a study conducted with Arab and Asian students, Biesenbach-Lucas (2000) examined the differences between the two writing tools and suggested that e-mail and word processing that were completed for course assignments were equally effective in providing opportunities for students to practice academic writing skills such as cohesive features or paragraph development. He also suggested that with regard to the increasing use of the Internet and e-mail in many contexts, teachers had to be prepared for the appropriate use of e-mail. Biesenbach-Lucas pointed out that when the students in the study were asked to write essays, the conversation topic might easily determine the text length and the content of students' conversations, whereas the topics in e-mail were normally derived from their daily life experiences. Therefore, through their direct experiences of CMC, teachers should consider the benefits and difficulties of these computer technologies in language learning. Commenting on the advantage of e-mail use, Day and Batson (1995) supported this point by suggesting that CMC helps to create realistic writing tasks, encourages writing practice because of teachers' genuine concerns, creates collaborative opportunities by generating and sharing ideas, and helps to organize ideas with real audiences.

With freshman students in a writing course at a university, Hartman et al. (1996) also studied the differences between networking writing such as e-mail and bulletin board use and traditional writing such as paper writing in the classroom. Both networking and

traditional writing section students were given writing assignments and encouraged to interact with their instructors or with other students through discussion from the first to the fourth draft. The findings show the advantages of CMC that facilitated the students' active participation in tasks, because their topics were usually about the real-world situation in which they were interested. The other advantage of CMC was that it reduced writing anxiety when the students exchanged mutual feedback electronically.

Hartman et al. (1996) also stated that increased social interaction in the networking writing section might facilitate the students' approaching the real-world situations in which they had been engaged during their writing process.

In summary, with regard to second-language acquisition and CMC, Carey (2002b) concluded that language learners in CMC could engage in active communication freed of the time constraints of face-to-face classroom interaction. Commenting on the advantages of CMC, Carey emphasized the communicators' active engagement in authentic interaction, which is possible when they had choices over interlocutors, topics, and time (p. 236). Carey identified several unique characteristics of CMC in relation to second-language acquisition: Language learners can engage in it at any time that they want on a particular topic in which they wish to communicate their thoughts to others who are interested in the same topics; they control the speed and complexity of the chosen input and output, as well as the processing; they construct meanings through this communication at an individualized rate, proceeding in slow motion through social interaction "so that they can slowly construct their communication while checking grammar, lexicon and content and this constructive process is critical to SLA" (p. 241).

## Second Culture Acquisition in Relation to CMC

It would be unrealistic to separate second/foreign-language learning from the awareness of the target culture, not only because culture is embedded and integrated into the language, but also because cultural awareness facilitates learners' communicative competence. Through interactions with native speakers of the target language, EFL/ESL learners may reduce social inhibitions and improve their communicative skills.

Commenting on the importance of the relationship between a language and the culture of the language being learned, Daquette (1988) used the word *yellow* as an example: "A person who is yellow (in English) is a coward, while one who is *jaune* (in

French) might appear to be ill, or `perhaps belong to an unorthodox political party" (p. 344). Thus, Daquette demonstrated that target language learners need to be aware of cultural factors that are associated with target words and expressions.

Enhancing cultural awareness for foreign language students through language experiences is a challenging goal for foreign- or second-language teachers. Although authentic materials such as movies, music, news, animation, and drama from the target culture may seem to be enough for foreign-language students wishing to have a meaningful experience of English, they still need interaction with native speakers from English-speaking countries. Such experiences are obviously limited in EFL environments. Therefore, foreign-language teachers must actively engage in cultural interaction by providing opportunities for meaningful interaction with native English speakers.

Communication skills can hardly be understood separately from cultural competence. In a study conducted by Cifuentes and Shih (2001), preservice teachers in the USA and Taiwan expressed very positive attitudes toward their online experience. For example, the participants appreciated the opportunities that CMC provided for individualized instruction with students, authentic language learning, and cultural exchange. In the study one participant commented, "I now see that such connections offer great learning opportunities . . . that would not be available in the typical class setting" (p. 6). Cultural awareness in the CMC context provided learners with opportunities for improving communication skills (Lee, 2002; Sehlaoui, 2001; Stock, 1998). Lee referred to the communication skills as "functional skills such as describing, narrating, expressing opinions that are essential for the development of language proficiency" (p. 16). Based on high school-level students' brief descriptions, discussions with them, and observations of synchronous communication, Stock concluded that cultural awareness of the target language enabled language learners to enhance their communication skills through eliminating social inhibitions, providing them with freedom and cooperation with each other, and creating more information. Other benefits of CMC are opportunities to learn cultural information, develop communication skills, and establish friendships. These results imply something valuable to EFL teachers because if they can learn cultural competence authentically, it can be passed on to their students during class activities. Cultural competence cannot be separated from language competence.

Chang and Hsu (1998), in their Chinese and American university-level e-mail project, asserted that nonnative English speakers' unfamiliarity with English culture provokes conversational breakdown; thus, nonnative English learners' CMC interactions with native English speakers should be conducted as an alternative method to face-to-face interaction. Ruhe (1998) investigated university-level students' intercultural awareness using an e-mail exchange between Canadian native English speakers and nonnative English students in foreign countries and found that the nonnative participants came to know how English was used culturally in different ways in specific contexts.

**Other Factors in Relation to CMC and Second-Language Acquisition**

The other important factors of second language acquisition (SLA) are self-confidence and social anxiety (Kelm, 1992; Leh, 1997), self-reflective thinking (Warschauer, 1999), self-paced progress (Tiene, 2000), and balanced participation between native and nonnative speakers (Kamhi-Stein, 2000). These are understood as nonlanguage factors (Gass & Selinker, 2001) rather than linguistic factors.

Leh (1997) pointed out that CMC (electronic mail) is especially useful to less confident foreign-language learners because it enables them to interact with others "without interruptions, time pressure, or social anxiety" (p. 314), which leads the learners to increase their language production. Leh further asserted that CMC has strong potential in foreign-language learning because it enables language learners to communicate with native speakers and to expose themselves to authentic target-language use. Using synchronous CMC with university students, Kelm (1992) concluded that, compared with face-to-to classroom interaction, CMC interaction could reduce students' anxiety.

Warschauer (1999) emphasized the potential of CMC in language learning and commented that it provides language learners with expanded opportunities by combining interpersonal interaction and reflective thinking concurrently, which is a crucial process in the foreign language acquisition process. In short, the preceding studies suggested that there is little resistance to the idea that interpersonal communication is crucial in second- or foreign-language learning. However, CMC has limitations without face-to-face interaction, such as in nonverbal cues, body language, or facial expressions, which are important forms of communication.

Nevertheless, Tiene (2000) summarized the relationship between second language acquisition theory and CMC: CMC is a useful tool in language learning because of its attractive features of self-regulative, self-paced quality and low anxiety, with little of the interruption from one's interlocutor that normally occurs in face-to-face interactions.

Factors important in second-language acquisition emerging from CMC studies vary, depending on several variables such as the participants in research and their partners or the purpose of the researchers. For example, Taiwanese are educated in Confucianism, which emphasizes that teachers should be respected as ultimate authority figures (Cifuentes & Shih, 2001). A common teaching in Chinese culture is, "Heaven, Mother Earth, emperors, parents, and teachers are most worthy of respect" (p. 9). Cifuentes and Shih commented that the Taiwanese students in his study regarded their online tutors as knowledgeable authority figures and therefore expressed their nervousness about coming into contact with them. One participant in the study identified her feelings toward her partner: "She feels like my tutor or my teacher and feels very serious. So I don't feel free to e-chat with her" (p. 9). Another factor regarding to second language learner's active participation may be the learners' relative content knowledge comparing to that of native speakers. Zuengler (1993) attempted to take into account the relationship between second language learners' content knowledge and their performance while they were engaged in conversational interaction. To measure the learners' active conversational participation, Zuengler used seven categories, amount of talk, pause fillers, back-channels, clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, and topic moves. The results showed that the relative experts engaged as the active talkers comparing to non-experts regardless of native or non-native speakers. That is, non-native speakers took over the talk when engaging in conversational interaction with native speakers who were relatively non-experts.

The communicators' perceptions of power relationships in the learning and teaching situation is a very important factor that can influence the participants' willingness to express their opinions. In conversation between nonnative and native teachers, language power is also an interesting area. By the same token, Freiermuth (2001) found that equity is an important factor in communication "because of the language power relationship, or expert perception" (p. 174). Dominant speakers or high-

status speakers tend to seize the majority of turns to speak, leaving low-status speakers with fewer opportunities, especially when the speakers are verbally expressing their ideas.

Normally, "the native speakers tend to take the lead in negotiating meaning, in nominating and terminating topics, . . . in offering assistance with syntax, lexis and pronunciation" (Freiermuth, 2001, p. 212). However, the following research showed that perceived power relationships are one of the important factors that can influence the equity of interaction. Regarding the role of experts, Woken and Swales (1989) conducted a study in which Chinese and Thai native English speakers were trained by nonnative English speakers to use a word-processing package called *Volkswriter Deluxe*. The nonnative English speakers provided hands-on teaching using English to teach Americans how to use the program. The researchers concluded that the specialists dominated the interaction because of the recognition of their expertise, in spite of their language deficiencies. According to Freiermuth, this power relationship is linked to turn-taking distributions, or taking a 'floor'; turn distribution is the heart of interactive communication; and CMC interaction contributes to the balanced turn distribution between native speakers and nonnative speakers. Alvarez-Torres (2001) also pointed out that CMC has an equalizing effect on the turn-taking distribution in terms of learners' participation.

Even though power relationships can exist between nonnative and native English speakers, especially in face-to-face interactions, Cifuentes and Shih (2001) showed that CMC could provide an equitable and collaborative communication model. In their study, preservice teachers in America and Taiwan began by introducing themselves. During the second message they established the needs of their keypals by asking what their partners needed to learn and how they might be helped. They "established learning goals ranging from understanding Shakespeare's English, practicing conversational English, and reading novels to becoming acquainted with American culture" (p. 4).

CMC contributes to balanced power relations. Power relationships between native and nonnative speakers may be different in CMC from those in face-to-face communication. CMC functions as the "equalizer of native and nonnative participation" (Kamhi-Stein, 2000, p. 447) as a result of being involved in conversation with the target language and culture (Gonglewski, 1999; Murray & Bollinger, 2000; Ruhe, 1998;

Schacter & Fagnano, 1999). Kamhi-Stein (2000) pointed out that CMC is often recognized as promoting balanced participation among students who differ in their willingness, relative power, and linguistic fluency; whereas in face-to-face discussions those factors may have a great influence on the balance of participation. This author found in his study of preservice teachers that native and nonnative speakers participated equally in CMC. He also found that differences in the participation of native and nonnative speakers were not statistically significant and that their discussions focused on various themes. These findings imply that CMC is significant to both preservice teachers and native English speakers, because some educators probably assume that native English speakers benefit from online communication with EFL learners.

In a descriptive study, Kamhi-Stein (2000) pointed out that Web-based bulletin board discussions showed that the students engaged in multiple dialogues with a high degree of peer support and collaboration. He concluded that CMC benefited participants by (a) allowing them to hear multiple voices and perspectives as well as cultural differences (b) promoting self-paced learning, and (c) reducing cultural and linguistic barriers. This last benefit is particularly important for nonnative English speakers.

These factors in second-language learning are widely recognized as variables that cause some second-language learners to be more successful than others. It is necessary for nonnative speaking teachers to decide whether CMC interaction is positive in learning a second or a foreign language. In the current study, in which CMC is recognized "as an innovative way of learning a foreign language in a foreign language field" (Gonzalez-Bueno & Perez, 2000, p. 189), EFL teachers' general views of CMC use need to be explored.

## ESL/EFL Teacher Development in Relation to CMC

Nonnative English speaking EFL/ESL teachers need to explore the methods of self-development not only as language teachers, but also as language learners in order to gain linguistic and cultural competence and professional teaching methods. Reves and Medgyes (1994) investigated nonnative speaking EFL/ESL teachers' self-image through questionnaires administered to 216 subjects in 10 countries. The majority of the teachers in the study showed a lack of English fluency, insight into semantic niceties, contextually appropriate language use, and self-confidence. Most of the participants referred to the

necessities of native/nonnative teachers' interaction and cooperation in order to share professional ideas and a wider variety of teaching methods, as well as for overcoming difficulties in appropriate language use by nonnative English speaking teachers. One of the interesting results in this study was that "hardly anybody mentioned the possibility of nonnative/native cooperation at the school level" (p. 363). These authors did not clearly explain the reasons for the result; however, it appears that the participants considered the reality of the situation, such as the lack of financial support from their school district or government. Reves and Medgyes emphasized the need for frequent exposure to an authentic native-language environment and for EFL/ESL teacher's self-confidence, because these are influential factors in successful teaching. They pointed out that "a constant realization of their limitations in the use of English may lead to a poorer self-image, which may further deteriorate language performance, and in turn may lead to a cumulatively stronger feeling of inferiority" (p. 364).

As for the necessity of teachers' use of CMC, Collis (1995) emphasized EFL teachers' use of CMC for pursuing new possibilities for the purpose of "building a professional community of sharing knowledge . . . [to help] teachers have the time and motivation to engage in reflective, self-directed learning activities outside of a formal in-service structure" (p. 64). Nunan (1999) agreed with Collis that ESL/EFL teachers need to share their professional teaching skills, ongoing programs, future curriculums, mutual goals, and sociocultural awareness through collaborative approaches with CMC experiences. Jonassen (1996) also asserted that EFL teachers who have limited sources of cultural information must increase their opportunities to interact with native English speakers by establishing a speech community and being aware of social distinctions.

Hoban (2002) suggested that teachers use CMC for the lifelong learning process as an alternative to face-to-face interactions because in CMC teachers reflect upon a topic (personal condition) and share with others (social condition). They can use CMC as a tool in an authentic context as they document their insights from a real-world problem-solving situation (contextual situation). Hoban contended that CMC use by teachers can "create new possibilities for sharing experiences with teachers in different contexts" (p. 150).

CMC is expected to be a way of promoting communication and collaboration between nonnative English speaking teachers and native English speaking teachers.

However, despite CMC's ability to connect teachers, little research has been undertaken on the ability of computer technology to facilitate inservice teachers' collaborative reflective processes (Hawkes & Romiszowski, 2001). Using a quasi-experimental approach for a two-year research period with 28 teachers from 10 elementary schools in a Chicago metropolitan suburb, Hawkes and Romiszowski analyzed the benefits and differences of computer-mediated and face-to-face discourse. Teacher teams in the study were given project-based units and delivered them to their classes. In the meantime, the teacher teams corresponded with each other by discussing the unit, including teacher development and student learning. The level of conversations was categorized by a seven-point reflection rubric measure. One example of reflective degrees is the explanations of experiences regarding current context with references to moral issues. Discourse analysis such as turn taking, comprehension check, and clarification request was employed to evaluate their reflective thinking. Based on the results, the authors stated, "Computer-mediated discourse achieves a significantly higher reflective level than does face-to-face discourse" (p. 300). Commenting on the importance of dialogue in teacher communities, these authors pointed out that collaborative conversation with CMC encouraged practical or professional knowledge that linked what teachers learned and understood about their practice to other conditions that impact student learning, such as family influences and the educational setting.

Emphasizing the need for teachers to have conversations with each other, Hawkes and Romiszowski (2001) argued that teacher-collaborative settings were the most likely contexts in which reflective thinking about learning and instruction can take place between teachers. CMC is basically a way of communication in which a person expects his or her partner's response both in synchronous and asynchronous online communication.

In face-to-face interaction, teachers exchange messages with each other as professionals. They also share ideas, beliefs, and perspectives in a process that can lead to collaborative reflection and meaning making (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). In this sense, Berenfeld (1997) asserted that teachers need to be encouraged to do CMC with their peers so that they also continue learning. Nonnative English speaking teachers are also language learners all the time. Freeman and Freeman (1998) pointed out that nonnative

English speaking teachers "often teach the language found in textbooks rather than the language students need to communicate or compete academically in an English-speaking environment" (p. 56). These authors suggested that nonnative English speaking teachers frequently interact with native-English speakers for authentic language use and professional experience sharing. In this sense, Sussex and White (1996) affirmed that although face-to-face communication is still preferred if possible in general, CMC provides "a very palatable alternative" (p. 206). These authors pointed out that "it is neither equitable nor realistic to expect language teachers to add self-education" (p. 206) on Internet interaction after a normal day's work. Education policy makers need to plan for the teachers to have CMC and networked learning by reducing their other duties, which facilitates their professional development.

EFL teachers need to have a positive attitude in exploring new ways of teaching and learning English, which continually change because of the fast development of technology. Commenting on the development of teachers, Gebhard (1996) stated that

> development is not something that teachers do just while in a teacher education program or at the beginning of a teaching career. Rather, even the most experienced teacher can learn new things about teaching, and development is enhanced when the teacher makes a commitment to ongoing development. (p. 15)

Moreover, he suggested that self-development can be enhanced by exploring the opportunities to learn new methods of teaching and learning.

Sercu (1998), in his theoretical study, also commented on the attitudes of foreign-language teachers: that they, as both cross-cultural teachers and learners, should share their ideas with the people from target language countries. He argued that foreign-language teachers should take an active part in searching for and developing new and effective ways of learning target language communication skills, the experiences of avoiding misunderstandings, and knowledge of how others see them. Interpersonal communication with people from target-language speaking countries is regarded as one of the best ways of fulfilling the above requirements.

Schrum and Berenfeld (1997) asserted that CMC facilitates teachers' discussions of how to teach, how to answer, how to handle students' behavior, and issues surrounding classroom preparation. Schrum and Berenfeld pointed out that the distinct benefit of CMC is to give teachers opportunities for reflecting thoughtfully about their teaching in

terms of both the theoretical and the practical side. They perceived an "incredible potential" (p. 89) for CMC in foreign language teacher development. Schrum and Berenfeld stated that "teachers' voices are too frequently left out of educational research" (p. 138); therefore teachers' experiences of CMC should be explored. They added that, through the experiences of CMC, "the process of self reflection is a meaningful professional activity, which also refines and strengthens professional autonomy and judgment" (p. 139).

Today, by overcoming distance and time, CMC has been established as an alternative way of teaching and learning English for English learners in EFL environments (Gonzalez-Bueno & Perez, 2000). Gonzalez-Bueno and Perez stated that for a new, ongoing program, "CMC has made its way into the foreign language field as an innovative way to increase foreign language use in the classroom" (p. 189). Therefore, EFL teachers need to search for opportunities for self-development during their careers.

Studying Web-based bulletin board discussions, an asynchronous communication tool, Kamhi-Stein (2000) found that preservice teachers in a TESOL (teachers of English to speakers of other languages) course were "very active in sharing their ideas with peers who had the same concerns and similar lived experiences" (p. 441). For example, two of the participants actively shared their experiences as teachers of Asian partners. Other participants shared various teaching techniques involving drama and role playing while reflecting on the benefits of participating in the Web-based bulletin board discussion. Kamhi-Stein concluded that these discussions were characterized by "a high degree of peer support, assistance, and collaboration" (p. 444). Similarly, Carey's work (2002b) with university students from the University of British Columbia illustrated the effectiveness of asynchronous bulletin boards by using Web CT. Carey used the term "virtually created E-mmersion," which signifies the usefulness of bulletin boards to language learners compared to immersion programs. Carey stated that it provided the students with "sufficient opportunity to develop their constructive use of the language to the point where they could engage in meaningful communication" (p. 236).

In order to investigate the potential of CMC in an English teacher preparation course, Freiermuth (2001) examined the interaction among groups of native speakers of English and nonnative speakers in order to explore the differences between the two

groups in terms of the nature of their members' interaction. The results show that through CMC, both groups had more harmonious interactive encounters than face-to-face communication could offer. Using both qualitative and quantitative research, the study also showed that CMC has obvious potential for ESL teachers, who should provide their students with not only an academic context, but also many interaction opportunities for improving their writing skills.

## Summary

The areas of literature discussed in this review included (a) defining CMC, (b) definitions of ESL and EFL, (c) social constructivism in relation to CMC (d) second/foreign language acquisition in relation to CMC, (e) second-culture acquisition in relation to CMC, (f) nonlanguage factors in relation to CMC, and (g) EFL teacher development in relation to CMC. As was noted, research on EFL inservice teachers and CMC has rarely been undertaken either qualitatively or quantitatively. Although there may be many factors that are important in the second language learning processes beyond the aforementioned factors such as interactions, sociocultural facets, and negotiation of meaning, the literature review in this study was limited to research that dealt with the relation between CMC and its application to the field of ESL/EFL.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

## Research Framework

This case study was an exploration and description of the CMC experiences of Korean inservice English teachers while corresponding with native English speaking teachers in Korea. My goal was to gain in-depth insight into the Korean teachers' CMC experiences. The methods, the research questions, the procedures, and the outcomes of this study were guided by a constructive research paradigm. In order to allow me to arrive at in-depth insights and understandings, using a constructivist paradigm, according to Guba and Lincoln (1994), enabled me to access multiple constructed realities through close interpersonal interactions. A constructive paradigm might produce the reconstruction of the understandings that the participants and researchers build on their experiences. Understanding in this study is based on the belief that the understandings that people construct of their experiences are social and cultural realities. According to the constructivist paradigm, the knowledge that the participants brought to their conversations was understood as socially and culturally constructed, and the knowledge that I brought to the research context was also comprehensible in the form of multiple constructions. Thus, dialectical interaction between two or more people was a way of gaining multiple constructions.

The participants in the study were not treated as objects of research, but rather as subjects with voices who co-construct knowledge and understandings; that is, multivoiced realities. A constructivist paradigm focuses on situated knowledge, which is generated by people in a specific context. Through interpersonal conversations in a given context, I hoped that the participants and I might develop a further shared understanding and that we would collaboratively create knowledge because the participants were regarded as an equally crucial element of the research process.

Interpretive research as a methodology based on a constructivist paradigm, according to Addison (1989), enables the researched and researchers to make sense out of the participants' life experiences through reflecting on researchers' pre-understandings of

the participants' existence and through placing my interpretations within a larger context in the process of dialectic conversations. Through a constructive research paradigm I hoped that I might be able to explore Korean inservice teachers' experiences, through which meaningful themes might emerge.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) described constructivism as a basic belief of inquiry that adopts relativism, specific constructed realities, and a subjectivist and hermeneutical/ dialectical methodology. Thus, the understandings and knowledge constructed during the process of research were viewed as the process of co-construction between the researcher and the researched.

Smith (1993) commented that interpretive study is not a method of objectively valid and correct interpretation, but rather it pursues a deeper and truer understanding. It might be impossible for me to interpret the participants' experience in an objectively correct way, because my interpretation started with my pre-understandings, and the participants' understandings were also based on their own pre-understandings. Thus I tried to understand their experiences more deeply and truly, rather than correctly.

My study was designed to help to understand the Korean EFL teachers' experiences of asynchronous and synchronous modes of CMC use. This study explored what the participants' experiences were like, how they perceived these experiences, and what meanings they constructed. In order to get at the complexity of their understandings, it made sense to situate the study in the qualitative research paradigm. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) stated that

> qualitative researchers attempt to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. (p. 2)

Explaining that qualitative research is an umbrella term, Merriam (1998) noted, "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed" (p. 6). Merriam further clarified the five characteristics of qualitative research: (a) The key concern is understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher's; (b) the researcher is the primary

instrument for data collection and analysis; (c) it usually involves field work; (d) it primarily employs an inductive research strategy; and (e) the product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive because it focuses on process, meaning, and understanding (pp. 7-8).

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) agreed with Merriam (1998); however, they further emphasized "meaning" as an essential concern in the qualitative approach:

> Researchers who use this approach [qualitative research] are interested in the ways different people make sense out of their lives. . . . They focus on such questions as: What assumptions do people make about their lives? What do they take for granted? . . . By learning the perspectives of the participants, qualitative research illuminates the inner dynamic of situations—dynamics that are often invisible to the outsider. Qualitative researchers are concerned with making sure they capture perspectives accurately. . . . They reflect a concern with capturing the people's own way of interpreting significance as accurately as possible. (p. 32)

Following these arguments in support of qualitative methodologies, I chose to situate my study similarly in order to explore the participants' CMC experiences, which were understood through my interpretations that I shared with the participants.

In summary, as Guba and Lincoln (1994) pointed out, "Human behavior, unlike that of physical objects, cannot be understood without reference to the meanings and purposes attached by human actors to their activities. Qualitative data, it is asserted, can provide rich insight into human behavior" (p. 106). Rich insights cannot be obtained without continuous dialogic interpretation of interviews and observations, which can lead to the understanding of a participant's meaning.

Among various qualitative research methods, I chose interpretive inquiry because it best addressed the aim of the study to advance my understanding of what the participants' experiences of CMC use would be like. When we conduct an interpretive inquiry, our understanding of the process can be informed by key ideas from hermeneutics, which is the process of interpretation of human experiences (Rorty, 1982). Regarding good interpretation, Smith (1991) stressed that

> as human beings, we are surrounded by the expressions of life in text, artifacts, gestures, voices, and so forth and we understand them to the degree to which we can show how they emerge from lived experience. Good interpretation shows the connection between experience and expression. (p. 191)

Key ideas from hermeneutics are interpretation as a creative activity, the importance of playing back and forth between micro-macro relationships, and the pivotal role of language in human understanding (Ellis, 1998a). On the first theme, Ellis defined creative activity as "an effort to discern the intent or meaning behind another's expression" (p. 15).

On the second theme, Smith (1991) pointed out that "good interpretation involves a playing back and forth between the micro and the macro" (p. 190), and the micro-macro refers to the specific and the general. As Ellis (1998a) elaborated, good interpretation of the expressions of others can take place with a researcher's constant movement back and forth between meanings that the researcher and participant have constructed. Understanding is always temporal, because, according to Smith, "understanding that which confronts us as new is made possible in the now by virtue of the forestructure of understanding which is already in us through past experience" (p. 193). He further stressed that prejudice (prejudgment) is "a sign that we can only make sense of the world . . . and provides the starting point for our thoughts and actions" (p. 193). Hence, researchers need to work holistically in order to understand with depth and breadth the participants' intentions or meanings. And the moment of the participants' statements should be interpreted in the whole web of meanings. Polkinghorne (1995) discussed the part-whole and co-relational nature of meanings:

> Much qualitative analysis is not content simply to identify a set of categories that provide identity to the particular elements of the database. It seeks a second level of analysis that identifies the relationships between and among the established categories. This analysis seeks to show how the categories link to one another. (p. 10)

The third theme of key ideas from hermeneutics involves the role of language in terms of understanding human beings. "Since language and understanding are linked, no final or fixed understanding of ourselves or others is possible, just as there can be no fixed or final language to express our understanding" (Ellis, 1998b, p. 9). Ellis supported Polkinghorne's (1995) view that "language is not a 'transparent tool' that reflects reality but a 'distorting screen' that projects experience onto the interpretation of reality" (Ellis, 1998c, p. 44). That is, the participants' language is understood as a mirror revealing the historical and current conditions of their own understandings. Therefore, researchers

should try to explore "the way in which within everything said there is something unsaid" (Smith, 1991, p. 194). Through the participants' stories from dialogues, I was able to gain insight into their behaviors or expressions on the current situation as an English teacher based on their web of meanings.

Addison (1989) stated that in interpretive research, a researcher's interpretation is part of a co-constructive process in building meaning:

> The researcher begins with pre-understandings that affect how he or she perceives the world and selects data. Theory must be built not just from the bottom up, but hermeneutically co-constituted in a dialogical manner that involves much self-reflection by the researcher. (p. 42)

Ellis (1998b) agreed: "Nor is uniquely correct interpretation possible since perception is interpretation and each person perceives from a different vantage point and history" (p. 8). Nevertheless, stated Ellis, by sharing knowledge through dialogue, the researcher and participants develop a fuller understanding of each other. As a researcher, I continuously shared my understanding of their experiences with the participants. Addison further explained this point:

> This is an important hermeneutic principle: that as the researcher learns about the social interaction he or she is researching, he or she also learns about him or herself. In interpretive research, the researcher's understanding of the situation transforms researcher and participants. (p. 42)

In order to explore the participants' meaning more deeply and truly, the researcher must continuously reflect on all information obtained from data sources. Carson (1986) emphasized the importance of reflective thinking in order to understand participants' insights that are embedded in their expressions and suggested that "in a hermeneutic sense, understanding is not complete unless we see what is understood as applying to us in some concrete way" (p. 82). What I explored in this study was my better understanding of the participants' CMC experiences. As Smith (1991) stressed, "Hermeneutics is about finding ourselves, . . . deepening our understanding of what it is we are investigating" (p. 201), and "hermeneutics should provide a report of the researcher's own transformations undergone in the process of the inquiry" (p. 199).

## Qualitative Case Study

The study that I undertook can be understood as a qualitative case study. Merriam (1998) observed that "there is still much confusion as to what constitutes a case study" (p. 19) and that a qualitative case study design is employed "to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meanings for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation" (p. 19). Merriam further suggested that case studies are differentiated from other types of qualitative research in that they are studied "in a single unit or bounded system, such as an individual, program, event, group, intervention, or community" (p. 19).

Regarding the concept of "bounded" study, Creswell (2002) stated that "bounded means that the case is separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries" (p. 485). Creswell also agreed with Merriam (1998) that a qualitative case study is exploring the procedure of inquiry and "represents a process consisting of a sequences of activities" (p. 485). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) believed that "the use of multiple methods reflects an attempt to secure in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question" (p. 2). Therefore, qualitative case study is understood as a process in a situation-specific context; discovery-based research, which is particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive.

This study was designed to explore the process of meaning construction of three Korean inservice teachers corresponding with native speakers of teachers of EFL through two modes of CMC, asynchronous e-mail and synchronous e-mail. The process of exploring their perceptions of CMC's benefits and difficulties and their suggestions about pedagogical implications of CMC for both teachers and students in elementary English education were studied as key concerns. It should be noted here for the purpose of the study that the benefits in the study were not limited to any specific linguistic area such as the improvement of the participants' lexical or grammatical awareness of English. This does not exclude, however, potential increased linguistic awareness and gains in language acquisition. Rather, the benefits included the Korean participants' changes in values or perceptions through their CMC experiences.

## My Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study with two native English speaking teachers and two Korean English teachers in March and April 2003. The goal of this study was to give me experience in setting up the procedure of research, conducting interviews, identifying the problems or difficulties that could emerge during the main research, and collecting and analyzing data. I conducted the pilot study with the same research questions as in this main research.

In order to gain access to both Korean and native English speaking teachers, I e-mailed six native English speaking teachers and 10 Korean English teachers who were once my colleagues. I had assumed that I could easily find native and nonnative speaking teachers who would participate in my pilot research; however, it proved to be difficult to do so. Korean English teachers hesitated to participate in the research because of their lack of confidence in speaking English in terms of accuracy and fluency. Native speakers did not want to talk with people whose only purpose was to learn English, and they did not want to reveal their ideas and possibly private thoughts to an unknown researcher.

Of the 6 native English speaking teachers and 10 Korean English teachers whom I had asked to participate in my pilot research, 2 native English speakers and 2 Korean English teachers agreed to do so. I randomly paired native English speakers with Korean English teachers, creating two pairs. The two Korean inservice teachers were in their 30s, one had had a chance to study English in Canada for one month, and they normally had 20 English classes per week from Grade 3 to Grade 6. Students took one English class per week in all elementary schools from Grade 3 to Grade 6. Normally, each elementary class has 30 to 40 students.

The participants agreed to engage in at least one real-time e-chat and one e-mail exchange per week to provide approximately eight exchanges in both real-time and e-mail communication. I asked each pair of participants to select the real-time e-chatting program that they would be most comfortable in using. They already had free e-mail addresses, and it was not difficult to share the same e-chat program. One pair selected *Daum Messenger*, and the other chose *MSN Messenger*.

Data for this pilot research were gathered through telephone interviews, participants' online conversations, my personal reflections, and their reflections in e-mail

to me. Interviews were conducted twice, once in the middle of March and then at the conclusion of the pilot. All of the interviews were conducted on the telephone for 60 to 90 minutes each, and the data were audiotaped and transferred to my computer for data analysis. Although I had planned to write a journal entry every time I received their online conversation and after the telephone interviews, I could write only a couple of journal entries. The participants sent me their online e-chat conversations three times, including e-mails in portfolio-like files sorted by date, which I had asked them to do because I believed that they would give me more opportunities to reflect on my journal writing.

Their reflective views on this project were sent to me three times during the research period. The Korean teachers expressed their perspectives on exchanging e-mails and e-chats with native English speakers, including the benefits and difficulties, which was very helpful for me to gain insight into their views on CMC as I set out to design my main study. The native English speaking teachers sent me one reflective e-mail in which they made several suggestions for my main research and stated their views on CMC with Korean inservice teachers. From the interviews, the reflective e-mails that were sent to me, and the electronic discourses, the four participants agreed that they needed more time to form their own judgment (or their perception of the purpose of this pilot research) of the value of CMC in an EFL context. However, their feedback and my preliminary analysis provided me with the insight to improve my research. That is, gaining a more in-depth understanding of their CMC experiences required more time than I was allowed in the pilot study. The pilot study also reaffirmed the importance of using these two modes of CMC, because .the two modes were complementary.

The findings from the pilot study were preliminary, but two main themes and several subthemes emerged from the participants' perspectives. The two principal gains that they identified were confidence in English conversation and the opportunity for exposure to authentic language use. Generally, they agreed that this experience gave them the opportunity for collaborative thinking, exchanging information about their teaching methods, and learning practical approaches to their classroom. Hence the two themes of professional information exchange and collaborative work that emerged helped me to focus on my research.

The difficulties include setting up e-chat time, technological problems, lack of English accuracy and fluency, control of discourse, and communication gaps, because of the short research period. I thus realized that I would be able to understand the participants' difficulties better if I had more opportunities to interview them for my study. I also recognized from the pilot research that I needed more participants in my main research project in order to gain richer insights from the participants.

At the end of the pilot research I asked the participants to suggest what pedagogical purpose CMC serves in the EFL context and to make suggestions for overcoming difficulties emerging from their experiences in order to better conduct my main research. They suggested electronic group discussion using Web conferencing, purposeful selection of participants, and exploration of native English speakers' motivation as one of the research questions. This contributed to my research design, and I informed the participants in my main study that their selections of CMC would not be limited to just one specific e-chat program, but rather that they were able to choose several methods of CMC, such as using an e-chat room. This also reminded me that I needed to investigate the native English speakers' motivation to participate in my study before I selected the participants.

I gained several further insights into the pilot research. First, this aided me in redeveloping my research data collection and analysis, which also indicated that a longer study was necessary. Second, the participants came to know the importance of establishing rapport in communication. Without rapport, they were not willing to express their candid thoughts, which led to superficial dialogues and meaningless conversations. I used this information when I paired the teachers in my study and facilitated rapport development through their candid communication. I also used my experience in my pilot study to rethink, revise, and rewrite some of my interview questions.

Prior to conducting the pilot study, although I strongly believed that CMC is very beneficial for nonnative English speaking teachers of EFL, I was somewhat skeptical about the benefits of CMC for native English speakers. However, the two native English speaking teachers of EFL made me rethink my perception. The native English speakers might want to meet the nonnative speakers: "My wife and I like meeting people. But I

don't have any Korean friends. I'm interested in meeting Koreans that I have something in common with" (Tom and Kim's e-chat, April 10, 2003).

It appeared from the pilot study that CMC is beneficial, but I had only begun to understand the reluctance to participate in a CMC project. Because of the possibly private and sensitive communication in CMC, it was difficult to find participants, even though they perceived the benefits of it. The hesitancy to participate in CMC research was evident in one of the native English speaking teacher's e-mail, even though he saw CMC as an effective tool:

> I think it would encourage the teacher to work constructively towards being a more effective teacher. But I would probably not volunteer my time to help a stranger who is just using me for my ideas or to correct grammatical errors. Communication is a two-way street. (Tom's e-mail, April 15, 2003)

This indicated that I needed to ask more native and Korean teachers to participate in my main study.

The native English speakers told me that even though they liked using CMC for their enjoyment or to develop their knowledge, they did not expect that other native speakers would want to participate in the project because they would not like to share all of their thoughts and the content of conversations with an unknown researcher. From this point I realized that the participants in my main research should be people who would be able to be patient with me until the end of my main research period. Hence I asked former colleagues who knew me well and trusted me.

Generally, the research questions were determined to be appropriate for the purposes of the main research. The majority of the themes that emerged from the data suggested the need for exploring the affective and sociocultural factors of second language learning and discovering ways of sharing in professional areas such as in teaching students through collaborative work.

## Selection of Participants

The main study was conducted in the context of a large city in the southeastern part of the Republic of Korea When I searched for potential participants for the study, I decided on criteria to select participants who had experiences of English teaching in elementary schools in Korea. Therefore, I used a selective sample for my study because

the nature of the possibly sensitive and private content of the online communication required that I select participants who would understand the purpose of my research, who wanted to share their opinions with foreign teachers, and who could commit to working with me until the end of my research. The participants were selected from schools in Korea that were geographically near each other and to myself as the researcher (Creswell, 2002). If the research site was geographically inconvenient for both the participants and me, arranging the focus group interview would be difficult. Also, Yin (1984) suggested that if a research site is geographically convenient, "it will allow for a less structured and more prolonged relationship to develop between the interviewees and the case study investigator" (p. 75). This point is important because a qualitative researcher needs continuous contact with the participants in order to collect trustworthy and authentic data.

The Korean English teachers who were currently working for schools at the time the study started were selected. Another criterion was Korean English teachers who work for public elementary schools, because I thought that purposeful selection would be preferred for the purpose of the study. The three native speaking English teachers did not necessarily have to work for elementary schools in Korea; rather, they might work in middle school or university-level schools because my main focus was on Korean participants.

In an effort to gain access to Korean participants, I e-mailed 10 Korean English teachers who had once been my colleagues. Some of the teachers hesitated to participate in the research because of their lack of confidence in speaking English accurately and fluently. To access native speaking English teachers, I used informal channels. For example, I asked Korean teachers who worked for elementary schools at the time if there were native-speaking English teachers they knew who might like to participate in my research. At this time I explained to the native speaking English teachers and the Korean teachers who I was, what the study involved, what the purpose of this research was, what the participants would be expected to do, and how long the study would take.

Of the 6 native speaking English teachers and 10 Korean English teachers whom I had asked to participate in my research, three native English speakers and four Korean English teachers agreed to do so. One of the Korean participants was a teacher who worked for a private elementary school, so I excluded him because the working

environments of private and public were much different. This left me with the three Korean and native speaking teachers who were willing to participate in the research. When I asked them whether they had any preferences in partners such as gender or age, they responded that it did not matter. I randomly paired native English speakers with Korean English teachers, creating a total of three pairs. The three Korean English teachers and their partners were strangers when they began their online conversations. I checked again to make sure that the foreign English teachers and the Korean English teachers were willing to participate in my research, and I confirmed their willingness by obtaining their formal consent based on the University of Alberta's ethics review.

The participants were asked to correspond with each other. They were expected to engage in at least one real-time e-chat and one e-mail exchange per week to provide approximately 40 exchanges for both real-time and e-mail communication. They were not given the specific topics for their online communication because the topics that they would choose were also part of what I was curious about and an important resource for data analysis. I asked each pair of participants to select an e-chat program that they were most comfortable in using. If they were not experienced in using a real-time e-chat program, I would have guided them in choosing an appropriate program. If the need arose, I would have recommended that they use either ICQ or MSN because I have used these two e-chat programs for several years. However, they already had free e-mail addresses, and it was not difficult for them to share the e-chat program. One pair selected *Yahoo Messenger*, and the other two pairs chose *MSN Messenger*.

All three of the Korean participants have masters' degrees in education in the field of teaching English in an ESL/EFL environment. It should be noted that they are all interested in and have good knowledge of the field of second language acquisition theory and practice based on their English-teaching experiences in elementary schools and their academic career. They also have had experiences of studying English with native speaking English teachers in a face-to-face environment in a private language academy in the same district. They are all female teachers and knew each other because they were from the same graduate school.

Kim, a woman teacher in her 30s, is a good conversationalist and easy to talk to. She was a newlywed and had approximately 10 years of teaching in elementary schools,

including 5 years of English-teaching experiences in these schools. She was currently teaching only English in about 20 classes per week to Grade 5 and 6 students. Although she had never lived in a country where English is a primary language, she had traveled in English-speaking countries. She became a participant two months into the study because she was very busy with personal work at the beginning of the study.

Shon is also a woman teacher who was in her 30s, with a child in elementary school. She had approximately 15 years' experience teaching in elementary schools, including 8 years of English-teaching experience in these schools. She was teaching English to Grade 5 and 6 students. Shon had had rich experience in traveling in many countries where English was a primary language, and she had studied English for one month in Hawaii as one of the teachers selected by the government on the basis of their excellent English proficiency.

Jung is a woman teacher who was in her 50s. Her English is excellent; however, she did not believe that she was highly proficient in English. She had approximately 25 years of experience teaching in elementary schools, including 10 years of teaching English. She has two children; one had graduated from university and the other was a high school student. She had also traveled to foreign countries, including countries where English is a primary language. During this research, as an expert in English curriculum in elementary schools, she was a sessional instructor in a university. She was also working as a homeroom teacher for Grade 3 students and an English teacher for one class period per week.

Tarry is a male teacher who was in his 50s and a native speaker of English. He was from Canada and had taught English in Korea for approximately five years in a private language academy and at a university. He was working for a university at the time of the study. Tarry was very proud of the fact that he had a teaching degree and a teaching certificate from Canada because not all native speaking teachers of English have this level of qualification. He always tried to use standard and formal English even when he was informally e-chatting with his colleagues. He was very eager to find the best ways to teach English in the Korean context. Tarry was very knowledgeable in the fields of linguistics, history, and education. He lived in Korea alone, and he usually stayed in his office from morning until late evening.

Tomy, a male teacher in his 30s, is a native speaker of English. He is from the United States of America and had taught English in Korea for approximately five years in a private language academy and an elementary school, and he worked for an elementary school at the time of this study. Tomy was interested in Korean culture and tradition, as well as traveling, sports, and movies. All of his family except his wife, who is a Korean, lived in the USA, and Tomy intended to return home in two years. He has no children and lived with his wife in an apartment near his school. Internet was available at his school and home, but was not available at home during the first half of the study.

Sharon was a newly married woman in her 20s. She is from Canada and had been teaching of English in Korea for about four years in a private language academy and an elementary school. She worked for an elementary school at the time of the study. She is easy to talk to and very candid in conversation. She planned to go to the USA, her husband's home country, in a few years. The Internet was not available at her home but was at school. Sharon is very social and leads an active life. She volunteered to teach volleyball to high school students twice a week.

The participants were matched as follows: Tomy and Shon; Tarry and Jung for two months, and after two months Jung switched to Sharon; and Kim began a partnership with Tarry. It should be noted that one of the native speakers of English, Tarry, was originally paired with Jung in the early stages of the study. However, Jung chose not to continue to correspond with Tarry two months into the study, at the end of October.

## Data Collection

The data for this research were gathered through one-to-one interviews, informal group interviews, participants' online dialogues, direct observation of the process of participants' online communication, and my reflective journal entries for a period of six months, from September 1, 2003, to February 30, 2004. The data collection for this study relied heavily on interviews with the research participants and their online dialogues using both synchronous and synchronous CMC. I wrote field notes regularly and incorporated them into my journal writing, with direct observations of the participants' online communications, to gather data. However, several conditions allowed me to have regular onsite observation of each participant only once. First, it was not easy to observe their CMC interactions in their homes while they were doing schoolwork. All of the

Korean participants were female teachers who had to do housework, care for a baby, cook, or clean after school. Second, all family members were usually at home after work or school. Third, it was not comfortable for the female teachers to be observed by a male researcher in their homes, which were their quiet spaces. Fourth, none of the participants liked my direct observation of their CMC interactions because they felt uncomfortable that I was able to witness the level of their English proficiency during the interactions.

In qualitative research the participants' perspectives on their use of CMC were the prime sources for my interpretation. When there were contradictions or ambiguities between the participants' perspectives and my understanding of them based on my interpretations, we discussed their meanings for clarification. The interview questions were carefully constructed according to previous data analysis of the participants' perspectives and my experience with the pilot study. As Hutchinson and Wilson (1994) noted, most qualitative methods endeavor to conceptualize participants' perspectives, rather than interpreting based on pre-established categorizations. Because of the "situated nature" and "personalized quality" of educational qualitative research, "data collection strategies may not be prescribed in accordance with shared guidelines of empirical practice" (Constas, 1998, p. 38). Even though, according to Constas, "each project is individually defined in educational qualitative research" (p. 38), the ultimate purpose of using qualitative methodology in human research is to understand a particular phenomenon in a specific context.

However, without any plan for data collection and data analysis, it might not have been easy to conduct prolonged research through exploring the participants' perspectives on their CMC experiences. Therefore I described the methods and strategies of data collection and analysis that I believed were appropriate to my research questions regarding the participants' perceptions of CMC's benefits and difficulties and their suggestions for using CMC after their experiences. Although I had to remember the procedures and purpose of my research, I understood that I "must be willing to change procedures or plans if unanticipated events occur" (Yin, 1984, p. 57). For instance, I changed my plan for direct observation of the participants' online interactions for several reasons discussed above.

A combination of multiple data sources was used in a qualitative case study in order to obtain in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences.

***Interviews***

I conducted interviews twice a month over six months with the Korean participants, for a total of 12 interviews with each teacher. As the study focused primarily on the interviews with non-native speaking teachers, the interviews with native speaker were held irregularly, only when needed, for a total of two interviews with each. The locations of the interviews included the participants' classrooms, offices, and houses, according to their convenience. The interviews each lasted 60 to 120 minutes, and the data were audiotaped and transcribed as soon as possible afterwards for data analysis (see Appendixes A, B, and C). The earlier interviews prompted me to generate new questions, which led in new directions. All of the transcriptions were given to the respondents to allow us to share our perspectives. Both the Korean and the native speakers provided clarifications and explanations on the transcriptions, which were also helpful for in-depth understanding of the respondents' experiences. I relied heavily on interview data for the research, because, as Weber (1986) commented, conversation in an interview reflects lived experience. Further, an interview reveals "a complexity of reactions, feelings, thoughts, ambiguities, confusion, variety, and paradox" (p. 70). To collect genuine data during interviews, a researcher should be a good communicator who, suggested Merriam (1998), "empathizes with respondents, establishes rapport (an atmosphere of trust), asks good questions, and listens intently" (p. 23). As a teacher for about 20 years and a PhD student who has studied qualitative research, I used my background knowledge of the interview process to help me to communicate effectively with the participants.

***Informal Group Interviews***

Besides formal interviews with the participants, I held four informal group interviews with the Korean participants at times that were convenient for them. I believe that the best moments in interviews occur when both the researcher and the participant are not aware of the tape recorder or the formal aspect of the interview and when they are engaged in genuine dialogue without artificial feelings (Weber, 1986, p. 69). I endeavored to capture the key concepts of the participants' perspectives by taking notes

as soon as possible afterwards and incorporating them into my journal writing on the process. Informal group interviews are similar to Creswell's (2002) focus group interviews: "Focus group interviews are advantageous because they yield the best information, when the participants are hesitant to provide information in any type of interview, and when the time to collect information is limited" (p. 206). When I was a teacher and I interviewed students in the past I recognized that, in some cases, group interviews were very effective. Therefore, during the research period I used two group interviews based on the participants' current situation as main sources of data collection; each lasted approximately 120 minutes. I believed that the informal interview would allow me to better understand the participants' experiences, and I explored the data from the informal interviews as carefully as possible. I also believed that in relaxed interviews the participants would provide me with insights that might not be attained through formal interviews. These interviews were also transcribed. "In reviewing documents, a good question to ask is whether there is any important message between the lines" (Yin, 1984, p. 57). A researcher must be able to "read between the lines"; he/she must listen to the participants very carefully to determine what was unsaid and what had not been obvious in previous interviews or from other data sources. Through the informal group interviews, the participants in this study created questions that I did not expect but that I would have wanted to ask to them, and their discussions with each other facilitated the exchange of their candid opinions to openly overcome the unequal power relationship between the interviewer and interviewee.

***E-mail and E-chat Dialogues***

All of the Korean participants sent me their online dialogues, including e-mails and e-chats, after they finished each one. Sampling was conducted throughout the research period that was derived from and connected to other data sources. For example, if cultural awareness emerged as a theme from the interviews, I sought samples of cultural awareness by scrutinizing the online dialogues.

Collecting online dialogues as a source of data, I realized that they included some personal and private content. Because of the possibly private or sensitive nature of online communication, the participants were given an opportunity to delete anything that they considered confidential, and they were also informed that they could request that I not

use anything that was sensitive to them. Although the respondents were informed that pseudonyms would be used instead of their real names, they did not want me to use sensitive dialogue.

Sometimes the participants lost their online dialogues by mistake, such as when they forgot to save the data on their computers or the e-mail to which the data were attached was not delivered. To secure the data, I also asked the native English speaking participants to save them, which was often helpful.

***Direct Observation of the Process of Participants' Online Communication***

When my participants agreed to be observed doing their synchronous e-chat and asynchronous e-mail, I expected to observe several aspects of their communication process not evident in the writing, such as anxiety because of their unskilled English typing skills and writing fluency and their lack of information about the cultures of English speaking countries. Although I expected to make regular direct observations, the participants' personal environment did not allow that, and I made just one observation per participant.

Direct observation is important in qualitative research because it provides a very valuable opportunity to study the participants' practices. These direct observations helped me to understand the Korean participants' difficulties or anxieties during their online communication. "Interpretive researchers recognize and take a stand on the priority of individuals' practices over their beliefs and attitudes" (Addison, 1989, p. 41). This statement implies the importance of on-the-spot observation at the place where the participants conducted CMC in order to understand what their practices actually were. The interviews provided enough data to allow me to explore their perceptions of their experiences, but their articulation in the interviews was sometimes not congruent with what they felt at the time of their online communication. Direct observation also provided me with specific examples of difficulty that they experienced while they corresponded with their native speaking partners. However, my onsite observation made them more anxious; all of the Korean participants stated that they were afraid of revealing their lack of English proficiency to me as though they were being tested for their English. Though in my initial plan I intended to have frequent contact with the participants in this way,

even one onsite observation was helpful to determine their emotions and feelings at the time.

Establishing a trusting relationship with the participants was very crucial, not only because of the possibly sensitive nature of private communications, but also because of the "observer effect" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 47). As Bogdan and Biklen proposed, I clearly recognized that my presence influenced the participants' behaviors. Even though I could not eliminate the observer effect, I gained insight into the importance of a trusting relationship. Developing trust with strangers is not easy, even though in my study the participants were previously my co-workers. It was possible that because I knew the participants very well, they did not want to reveal their level of English proficiency in their desire to "save face" in my eyes as the researcher.

***Reflective Journal Writing and Field Notes***

The reflective journal writing that I used in this study was based on McKay's (1996) concept of a journal, which differs from a notebook or field notes in that it requires more than a straightforward recording of events. It is through "a written response to the question of 'what do these events mean to me?'" (p. 29) that advanced thinking and personal connections are facilitated. Thus reflective journal writing is understood as a method of leading to a powerful meaning-making process. To help gather ideas throughout the research period, I kept my journal with me all the time and included all of my reflections in it. I found it helpful to record my thoughts and synthesize other data, including interviews and online dialogues, and to conduct the data-collection and analysis process at the same period. As Ellis (1998b) noted, "Writing has a significant role in this process of interpreting the data our explorations produce. Writing invites reflection and deliberation" (p. 6). Reflection and deliberation allowed me to raise questions about the genuine meaning embedded in the participants' articulations and nonverbal clues during the specific interview context. Because hermeneutic inquiry tries to find understanding rather than explanation, the writing process itself is very important in terms of extending and clarifying one's understandings of the research context. By synthesizing the participants' stories, perspectives, online discussions, field notes, and my previous pre-understanding through the reflection process in my journal writing, I was trying to

"weed the significant from the insignificant" (Morse, 1994, p. 30)—co-construction of meaning, which is an understanding of meanings.

I had learned the importance of journal writing from my pilot research. It was difficult for me to read the participants' online dialogues every time they exchanged e-mail and e-chatted because it could have been a burden for them to store their e-chat conversations on their computers and to send me files frequently. Therefore, I read the online conversations every two weeks, which resulted in a lack of detail in my journal writing. In this main research I asked the Korean participants to send me their online dialogues each time; just in case, I also requested that they store the data on their computers.

I expected to have a great deal of data from field notes, but because of the rare opportunities for direct observation of the participants' online interactions, I had only one set of field notes for each Korean participant. I believed that field notes would be helpful in gaining insights from their instant activities.

## Data Analysis

To explore the Korean participants' experiences, I analyzed the data collected from the transcripts of their taped interviews, my journal writing, field notes that I made during the informal group interviews, and the participants' online dialogues, which linked the participants' ideas into themes. Along with continuous data collection from the beginning, I conducted data analysis inductively to gain an understanding of the meanings that the participants constructed and reconstructed from their experiences. In other words, I did not have pre-established categories (e.g., criteria for analyzing motivation, anxiety) that I used to analyze the participants' experiences. I believed that meaning was constantly being shaped and reshaped as a result of the continuing dialogical encounters between people. I also believed that the interpretation of meaning could be pursued only "with a constant movement back and forth between the particular expression and the web of meanings within which that expression is embedded" (Smith, 1993, p. 187).

As I interviewed the participants, read their online dialogues, and made field notes, I began to reflect on and analyze the data I had collected, after which I wrote a synopsis

and topical points. The initial reflection provided me with the direction for the next interviews. All of the data, including the informal interviews, were analyzed in the same way, and each analysis was the starting point for the second reflection. The second interview or other data were also the starting point for the next data collection and data analysis, during which possible themes gradually emerged. During the process of data analysis, I formulated questions based on themes from the data and on the big picture, which was the research questions for the study. While I read the interview transcripts, the online dialogues, and my journal writings, I marked sentences or phrases that might be related to the questions and would be categorized into a web of themes.

For good-quality interpretation, Ellis (1998a) suggested that data analysis in interpretive research cannot be predetermined because the themes of study should emerge from the participants in a specific context. I understood that the main instrument of data collection and analysis in the study was the researcher rather than a standardized or pre-established sequential method, because the data were to be interpreted by the researcher. Ongoing and continuous data analysis helped me to make sense of the data gathered, because the analysis was not the result of the study, but rather a part of a continuous process.

With regard to good interpretations, Ellis (1998a) discussed the forward and backward arc of the hermeneutic circle (Figure 1). She explained that with the hermeneutic circle, "data are re-examined each time with a question reframed from what emerged from the previous set of deliberations" (p. 26). The purpose of searching for themes was to highlight coherences and commonalities flowing in the participants' stories, which were parts of their whole life. Through careful reading and rereading, as well as careful listening to and reflecting on their stories, I was able to reveal the teachers' meanings of CMC use. This study was conducted to gain a heuristic understanding of the participants' experiences. Using open-ended interviews, I tried to understand the participants' holistic and comprehensive meaning of CMC use within their roles as EFL English teachers as well as human beings.

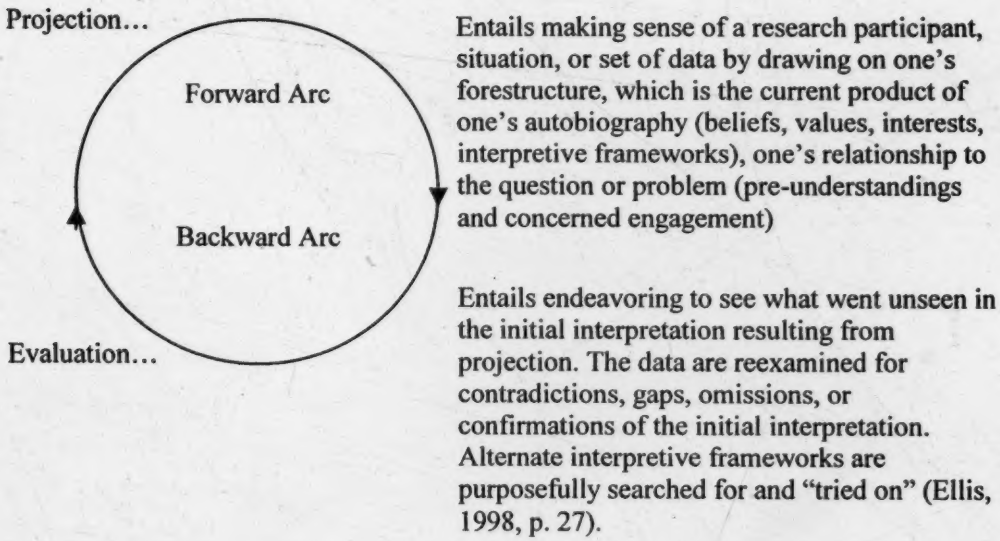
Projection...
Forward Arc
Backward Arc
Evaluation...
Entails making sense of a research participant, situation, or set of data by drawing on one's forestructure, which is the current product of one's autobiography (beliefs, values, interests, interpretive frameworks), one's relationship to the question or problem (pre-understandings and concerned engagement)
Entails endeavoring to see what went unseen in the initial interpretation resulting from projection. The data are reexamined for contradictions, gaps, omissions, or confirmations of the initial interpretation. Alternate interpretive frameworks are purposefully searched for and "tried on" (Ellis, 1998, p. 27).

*Figure 1.* Hermeneutic circle (Ellis, 1998a).

When all of the data were collected, I reread them to categorize common topical keywords. I revisited my research questions and grouped the topical keywords in each research question. I also added my interpretive account to each topical key word based on the categories. After rereading the transcripts, listening to the audiotapes, reading the literature related to the study, and reflecting on my interpretations of the data for six months, I began to see themes emerging from the data.

The primary data for the research were from interviews, online discourse, direct observation of the process of the participants' online communication, field notes, and my journal writing based on the other data sources. From the beginning of the process of data collection, I tried to understand their lives as English teachers of nonnative speakers in an EFL context, which was connected to what CMC might be in their lives. Comparing and analyzing various data, I tried to find the unstated meaning, because "within everything said there is something unsaid" (Smith, 1991, p. 194). The interviews were recorded, transcribed, analyzed, and shared with the participants. The purpose of sharing my interpretations and the transcripts with the participants was not to verify my

interpretations, but rather to determine how close these interpretations were to the participants' feelings or perspectives or whether they were strong enough to reveal the participants' perspectives.

Based on the hermeneutic circle, at the first stage of interpretation I used my preconceptions and my background understanding of CMC. However, at the second stage of interpretation I tried to discover what might have been missed during the first stage through evaluating my pre-understanding. For example, I asked myself how it was meaningful to the participants, what I had missed in the previous interviews, what the participants might have felt at the moment that they had difficulty, and what the result would have been if I had not missed the questions. Doing so required frequent interactive and dialogic conversations between the participants and me. What I strived for was openness in order to learn their perspectives. In my interpretation, I proceeded with caution. Addison (1989) argued that through interactive and dialogic discussion, the researcher and participants could reach a point where self-disclosure and meaning negotiation emerge and that "interpretation is not conjecture" (p. 276). During the period of data collection and analysis, I categorized themes related to my research questions. The themes were derived from my data. When these data were coded, I collaborated with the participants by discussing how close my interpretation was to their perceptions. That is, through the process of data collection and analysis, I shared my interpretation of the meaning that the participants would construct of their CMC experiences. In response to their comments and insights, my interpretation was negotiated through the process of dialogical conversations and often revised. My interpretations of the data might differ from those of someone else, even though my research was conducted in the same context and with the same participants.

In summary, I have described the analysis of data based on interpretive research. In qualitative case study, data collected during a bounded research period are based on the specific participants' subjective experiences, which are interpreted by the researcher through sharing mutual understandings between the researcher and the participants. I also described the researcher as the main instrument, the process of gaining insights into the participants' perceptions, and the emergence of themes from the specific case.

## Ethical Considerations

Because of the possible sensitive nature of the online communications, I carefully considered obtaining consent from the participants, explaining the purpose of my research, informing them of their right to withdraw at any time, the period of research, and the precise process of data collection.

Consent forms included a detailed explanation of the purpose of my research, the nature of the data collection, and the length of time required for the data to be collected. After I gained the participants' consent, I ensured their anonymity and used pseudonyms in the written documentation during data collection and analysis and in my final paper. I also informed them that they could opt out of the study at any time and that they were not obliged to participate if they were not willing to do so. I followed the University of Alberta's ethical guidelines for research.

# CHAPTER 4

# DIFFICULTIES

In this chapter I discuss the second research question (the difficulties) before the first one (the benefits) because most of the themes in relation to the difficulties emerged in the early stages of the study. The benefits of CMC and the pedagogical suggestions from the Korean participants are described in the following chapters.

The CMC experiences of the three Korean English teachers differed greatly from those of the participants in other studies in the field. It has been reported that nonnative speakers (NNSs) feel comfortable and experience low anxiety in CMC interactions with native speakers (NSs; e.g., Beauvois, 1998; Freiermuth, 2001). For example, Leh (1997) pointed out that CMC is useful to less-confident foreign language learners because it enables them to interact with others "without interrupt interruptions, time pressure, social anxiety" (p. 314). Furthermore, it was very difficult to find studies that reported second language learners' difficulties—including anxiety, embarrassment, and frustration—in their CMC with native speakers.

However, all of the Korean respondents in my study stated that their difficulties during CMC with their native-speaking partners included a variety of uncomfortable emotional feelings with the unequal language power relationship. The three Korean participants were English teachers who had already experienced face-to-face meetings with native speakers in a group meeting and one-to-one meetings at private language schools. All three Korean participants identified the difficulties that they encountered in CMC with native-speaking teachers as language, cultural, technological, environmental, and time issues. The ethical issues arose with the two female participants whose partners were male. However, although some of the difficulties remained throughout the entire research period, many of them discussed in this chapter were reported in the first half of the research period.

## Turns at Talk

The most difficult constraint, according to the Korean respondents, was their lack of proficiency in expressing their ideas in English, which often resulted in difficulties

with turn-taking in their conversations. This lack of proficiency was not the only factor that impeded the flow of their communication; as discussed below, other difficulties occurred from their lack of skill in the use of English, including the confusion of turn-taking. A comment from one of the participants illuminates the turn-taking confusion in the e-chat exchanges:

> I did not know what we were talking about and where we were going to at the moment. Tarry was talking something, and I was talking something that he previously asked me at the almost same time. It was like four-persons talk show. (Jung, September 7)

This example demonstrates that when someone is saying something and his or her e-chat partner is answering a previous question, questions and answers can become mixed, which causes confusion in turn distributions.

For Jung it was a very funny experience. While e-chatting with Tarry, his native-speaking partner, she was confused about what he was saying. In the middle of responding to a message that she had received from him, another message arrived from him, and she stopped typing at that moment. She then had to decide which of the two messages she should answer first, and finally responded to the second message, ignoring the first one. She erased the reply to the first message that she had already begun to type, but which remained uncompleted, and began to respond to the second message from her partner. While typing the second message, a third message arrived from her partner, and she then had to decide which one to respond to. Finally, she sent her second reply and then the third one.

In the interview with Jung, I guessed from my experience in talking with people from different countries that the overlap in communication was caused by cultural differences in terms of conversation flow. Koreans normally believe that it is polite and good manners to wait until the other person has stopped talking; North Americans do not always wait to speak and sometimes interrupt the other's talk. But with Jung it was a different story in the kind of turn-taking overlap in her e-chats with her Korean friends. In these cases she could figure out what was going on because it did not take long to read and comprehend her Korean friends' messages. However, reading in English was very different from reading in Korean because English has different sentence structure from Korean, which causes difficulties with comprehension for Korean people. The different

structure is a barrier in Korean participants' gaining sentence-based understanding instead of word-by-word comprehension. When Jung received her native-speaking partner's follow-up message before she had fully understood the previous message, she found it hard to answer either of these messages correctly.

For Tarry, Jung's partner, it was also frustrating. After sending his first message in an e-chat exchange, he waited for a few seconds, expecting her response. But no response came! (interview, September 28). On *MSN Messenger* it is obvious when one's partner is writing, and when Tarry's computer indicated that his partner was typing, it seemed to take such a long time. Although Tarry knew that Kim was writing what was probably the response to his first message, he decided that, rather than wait, he would send his second message. In the meantime, Tarry found that Kim was erasing her own message, as indicated on *MSN Messenger*, and he was curious about why she had done so. He waited for a short time, and he reported in his interview that he had been a little bored and decided to send a third message. Kim, Tarry's later partner from November) complained:

> I found that he already started typing something before I sent my messages. So before I sent my messages, his next messages arrived. Then I had to erase my messages to come up with his questions. It is unfair, isn't it? But I have no choice. I could neglect his next messages, but it was also not easy. I was always busy for reading and answering his questions, with no time to ask something to him. Whenever I have e-chats I am nervous but excited. But just after starting e-chats, I don't have even time to be nervous. So busy! The fact that someone is waiting for my instant messages makes me very nervous. (November 15)

Kim also cited a specific example related to the confusion of turn-taking. She laughed loudly at herself while she read her e-chat dialogue after she finished corresponding with Tarry, her partner. In the following e-chat Kim and Tarry were talking about a person who had gone abroad alone to study and left family in Korea. Kim began to say first that if she were that person, she would not allow her husband to study abroad alone. This e-chat shows how turn-taking does not follow the usual patterns and that misunderstandings can occur:

> Kim: I can't do that like his wife for my husband.
> Tarry: Why not?
> Tarry: Is he a terrible person?

> Kim: One day, my husband would like to go abroad to study something. It was not easy to make up my mind to let him to do what he wants to do.
> Tarry: Ms, Kim. I know that it is early, but I have to go to the washroom/ bathroom/men's room.
> Kim: NO!!!
> Tarry: I have to go almost immediately.
> Tarry: I am going to have to say goodbye!
> Kim: Haah. (e-chat, November 8)

Kim explained in an interview her confusion with turn-taking:

> When I read again after finishing e-chat, I thought it was so fun for me to die. You see, it looks like that I said 'NO' responding to his message that he had to hurry to go to washroom. Actually my 'NO' was the response to his first question, 'Is he a terrible person?' (November 20)

Another example of this interruption in e-chat is given below. Tarry indicated his frustration with Jung's interruptions during their e-chats. In my interview with Tarry, he reported that he could not understand his partner's manner (interview, October 25). Jung also complained about Tarry's manner and was frustrated that he did not wait for her messages (interview, October 5). However, as indicated below, the confusion caused by turn-taking was slowly solved. The participants used a couple of strategies such as .' . . ,' which indicated 'continued,' or 'and' at the end of a line. Tarry's suggestion of 'Your turn' on the last line as indicated below is a typical example of a solution to avoid turn-taking confusion:

> Jung: Sorry, I type too slowly.
> Tarry: Actually, This week I taught on Monday and won't have to teach until next Monday!
> Jung: I tried to type fast but it is also as difficult as speaking English.
> Tarry: Hey! I have an idea.
> Tarry: How about we each wait for the other to finish before we type a new message?
> Jung: I taught English today.
> Tarry: Ahhh! I have the best job in the world!
> Tarry: Your turn. (e-chat, October 2)

The turn-taking rule ('Your turn') did not last long; however, both Jung and Tarry said in their interviews (Jung, October 5; Tarry, October 25) that it had been helpful in the early stages. In particular, for Jung, who had difficulties in conversation with native speakers and lacked proficiency in English, the rule gave her a feeling of comfort.

It seemed that confusion over turn-taking was one of the issues that need to be addressed; it was directly linked to language problems such as reading or writing proficiency. Confusion over turn-taking was stressful to both native and nonnative speakers, and the latter tended to apologize in their e-chats. Tomy, one of the native English speaking participants, was very satisfied with his e-chats with Shon, his Korean partner. In his interview he mentioned that turn-taking was one small difficulty that he had (November 29), but that he could think of nothing else that was dissatisfactory about the e-chats. Although he was sure that this was only a small problem for both of them, he found it hard to control their conversations because of the problems with turn-taking. If they wanted to say or add something or they agreed with each other, they were allowed to do that anytime. But they recognized that it was hard to know where the conversation was heading as a result of the delays and turn-taking problems.

The Korean participants perceived that the confusion over turn-taking was their fault because of their lack of proficiency in reading, writing, and typing in English. They apologized to their native-speaking partners when confusion arose during their e-chats because they felt that if they were as proficient in English as the native speakers were, the confusion would have never occurred.

> Shon: Oh, I did cut you.
> Shon: Sorry.
> Tomy: Cut me? What do you mean?
> Shon: I cut what you are saying.
> Shon: I don't know what I say in English.
> Tomy: No, that's okay. That's the problem with e-chatting online. When one person is responding to something, the other is also responding to something, maybe the same thing, maybe a different thing.
> Tomy: You did not cut me off. I was too busy trying to type to check what you had just said. Sometimes if I'm typing something and I get a message from you, I wait until I've finished and sent my message before I check what you said.
> Tomy: There's a delay in the conversation that occurs when e-chatting online that doesn't occur when you are talking face to face. Sometimes it feels like having two conversations at the same time.
> Shon: Right.
> Tomy: Or like we are four people talking instead of two. (e-chat, October 3)

In an interview, Tomy reported that it was his responsibility to understand his partner's difficulties (October 15). He already understood that when he e-chatted with his partner, he needed to be patient. Tomy said that he sometimes wrote two, three, or four

sentences while waiting for Shon to write one. Tomy dominated the conversation in terms of the amount of talk and the number of turns that he took. To avoid the 'four people talking instead of two' phenomenon, Tomy and Shon made a rule that one would wait until the other's message arrived. Tomy said in the interview that he began to think that Shon might have experienced stress in trying to comprehend the many messages that Tomy had sent, and he decided that he would not write again until he received Shon's message. Tomy also said in the interview that he did not change topics because he realized that this confused Shon.

This is the limitation of CMC compared to face-to-face interaction. If we look at Blair's (2000) work, in which she described the diverse tools for talk in face-to-face interaction, we can find many ways of expression such as waving the hands, an accent imitating that used in the American south, African American speech, hands on the hips, gesturing with the hands, a threatening tone, a cross-legged position with the arms folded over the legs, shaking hands, shouting at someone, exaggerating and elongating vowels, a mini chant in a lilting kind of rhythm, and many other ways of delivering one's messages. These tools may be of great help in avoiding the confusion described above.

**Perceived Lack of Proficiency**

The Korean participants usually tended to devalue their English proficiency. All three native speakers believed that their partners' English was good enough for them to converse in English. However, the Korean participants' lack of self-confidence in their English proficiency caused misunderstandings. For instance, they sometimes thought that their native-speaking partners neglected them because of their low level of English proficiency:

> Jung: But I am sure she hasn't read my previous e-mail since ten day's ago. He mustn't have read my e-mail.
> Lee: Why don't you e-mail him again or use instant Messenger?
> Jung: I do not want to beg answers. (September 30)

Jung indicated in this interview that her expectations of herself and her interactions with Tarry did not match, which made her feel neglected. Her opinion arose not only from the delays in receiving Tarry's e-mail, but also from her perception of his behavior when he did not respond to her. Jung checked her e-mail box every day, and she was disappointed

by his lack of response. She assumed that her partner did not want to continue to correspond with her, and she wondered about the reasons for his reluctance. She read all of his e-mails again and found several messages in which he said that he was very busy. However, she was skeptical about that. She felt that, no matter how busy he was, he should have had time at least to read her message and that he must have pretended to be busy! After waiting and reading her partner's response, Jung sent him a polite e-mail:

> Tarry, when I received your two letters at the same time, I was embarrassed. I'm so sorry if I urged you to think that you had to write back to me. Am I bothering you? But I would be sad if my letters still remain unread in your mailbox over a week. (September 30)

Jung finally received an e-mail that Tarry wrote in a short memo style saying that he would e-mail her back soon. Jung guessed that her partner might not be interested in CMC interaction with her, and she perceived that it was because of a lack of interesting topics or his lack of a need or motivation to correspond with her.

In an interview Kim lamented that she felt negative about her partner's lack of response to her e-mails:

> I was disappointed from the first stage. I do need to know my partner's available time for e-chat and he needs to know my available time for it. So I e-mailed him with very detailed monthly and daily schedule in a calendar attached to the e-mail. However he e-mailed me just three lines with very short memo. (November 20)

Regardless of the contents of the e-mail, the length of it was important to the Korean participants. Writing their e-mails took from 30 minutes to two hours for the first draft to edit, revise, and recheck errors to make them as faultless as possible. Then they waited, checked daily for replies, and finally, when they read their native-speaking partner's three-line response, they were upset. Kim reported in an interview that it was not just a feeling of disappointment, but rather that her pride was hurt.

Jung also provided a similar example. While conducting CMC with her second mail partner, Sharon, Jung also experienced hurt feelings. She asked Sharon questions in her e-mail, such as how to say something in English, but received no response. Jung then sent a second e-mail with the same questions, but when she received Sharon's e-mail, the answers that she had expected were not there. Instead, Sharon's e-mail was about her school life and busy schedule for the next week. Jung was sure that her partner was

ignoring her, because Jung thought that her partner had not even opened the first two e-mails; if she had, her response would have included the answers to her questions. In her interview, she revealed that her pride had been hurt:

> Jung: I think she intentionally did it.
> Lee: Intentionally?
> Jung: Maybe not. I don't know. But in this situation how can I have desire to write her e-mail? It takes one to two hours normally. If I knew that my partner would not open it for a long time, I should not have sent her the long e-mail. I sent him two more e-mails, even though I haven't got his reply yet. I am really stressful. I hurt my pride and I sometimes consider that why I am under this kind of so stressful condition. I think it is the time of slump to me. (November 20)

Jung presumed that her lack of fluency in English resulted in no response from her partner, and she felt that if her English had been good enough to conduct a conversation in English smoothly with her partner, Sharon would have responded more quickly to her e-mail. In the informal group interview (November 24), the other Korean participants believed that it is possible for people normally to be occasionally lazy, but they agreed that if their communicative competence in English were excellent, their native-speaking partners would be more interested in keeping in touch with them more often. It was their perceived lack of communicative competence that caused their pride to be hurt because of the native speakers' reluctance to frequently exchange e-mails and e-chats. In an interview Sharon said that because she had had a great deal of personal and schoolwork to do for a period of two weeks, she was unable to respond to her partner's mails (December 10). During this time she worked at school in the morning and then coached a basketball team, she had housework, and she had to make a presentation at a conference. Furthermore, she did not have Internet access at home, so she could not check her e-mail regularly at home. After discovering why her partner had been unable to respond to her e-mails for two weeks, Jung said in an interview that she began to believe that her low level of competency in English was not the main reason after all (November 20).

It seemed that the Korean participants experienced complex emotions. First, as stated by Jung in her interview, she would have stopped corresponding with her partner at the moment when she felt that her pride was hurt if she had not so been involved in the research because she worried that it would influence the research in a negative way (November 20). It was the relationship between the participants and the researcher that

she felt made her situation complex. Second, although the Korean participants were English teachers who are regarded as experts in the field of English teaching, they still faced many problems when they communicated with the native speakers of English. Third, they realized that CMC was becoming meaningful to them as non-native English teachers, which drove them to continue with the project (informal group interview, November 24). It is likely that they felt stressed because of this desire to continue, their hurt pride, and their fear of jeopardizing the relationship between the researcher and themselves as friends and colleagues.

**Lost in Translation**

All of the Korean participants sometimes felt 'frustrated.' (The single quotation marks indicate that *frustration* may not be the proper English translation for the expression that the participants used, *Ga-seum-ie dap~dap~ha-da.*) When asked to use Korean expressions to describe their feelings, they used the literal translations of 'trench,' 'irritated,' 'tight-up,' 'stressful,' 'frustrated,' and 'thirsty.' I thought that the proper word might be 'anxiety,' but it is not likely because 'anxiety' implies 'worry,' and the participants asserted that their feelings did not relate to 'worry,' but rather to a strong desire mixed with a feeling of being frustrated I used a dictionary to search for the proper English equivalent and talked with them about their feelings; they all agreed that the best word was 'thirsty.' As a nonnative English speaker, I find it difficult to represent the expression they used. The feeling was interpreted as very different from the anxiety experienced while writing a test.

Kim tried to communicate the feeling in her dialogue with her partner, but Tarry failed to understand even what she was asking:

> Tarry: I have to write so that you will understand!
> Kim: Thank you. I have been so thirsty.
> Tarry: Thirsty?
> Kim: I couldn't find out proper words. So . . . I was thirsty.
> Tarry: Thirsty . . . for knowledge? for understanding?
> Kim: To tell my mind was so was difficult. I am thirsty.
> Tarry: Ahhh! I think it must be based on a Korean expression.
> Kim: But I think there might be a similar English expression.
> Tarry: Ah! Good! Again, we communicate!
> Tarry: I don't know but I know that we say a person has 'a thirst for knowledge.'
> Kim: Well . . .

> Tarry: Right! You should be proud of your abilities.
> Kim: Thank you. (e-chat , December 12)

Kim was not thirsty for knowledge or for understanding; she was simply trying to find a proper English word for "*Ga-seum-ie dap~dap~ha-da*," but Tarry was not able to understand. Nevertheless, Kim said "Thank you." Tarry and Kim recognized that there was a misunderstanding, but they did not know what the problem was, and Kim's feeling was indescribable to me. Furthermore, she became frustrated when she read her partner's statement, "You should be proud of your abilities." During interviews with native English speaking participants, I often understood the expression as 'frustrated.' As all of the Korean participants stated—and I feel the same way that they did—there is a subtle difference between 'frustrated' and the expression they were seeking. The Korean participants often encountered this sort of feeling, not only because of their lack of English vocabulary, but also because of their lack of fluency in grammar, phrase and sentence structure, and typing.

The feeling of being 'thirsty' was also caused by the Korean participants' lack of fluency in typing. *Typing fluency* can be defined in this study as the capability to convert ideas into letters on the keyboard in the target language. Typing fluency is different from typing speed, because the former requires the ability to combine thinking and typing simultaneously. It seems that typing letters while reading might be distinguished from simultaneously thinking and typing. Jung reported that she sometimes found herself composing and typing words that she did not intend to say. Typing fluency requires focused attention on one's thinking. Jung also mentioned in her interview that her typing fluency was often much better when she typed letters while reading compared to typing letters while thinking (September 20), but she felt that she could have typed better if her English proficiency had been better. She provided an example related to typing fluency during e-chats. Jung explained that her lack of language proficiency caused a great deal of difficulty in typing English letters:

> I am actually not very fast at typing English letters. While thinking English sentences, I have to find the location of each letter on computer keyboards, which makes me have double troubles. I often could not hear myself think. I start just 'Eager typing skill' at the beginning stage. So after I finished e-chats, I could not remember what I talked about. (September 20)

Kim expanded her view:

> My typing fluency in English is not bad; however, I can notice how difficult it is to type and think right now—as I type—and my head feels like it is full of wool. How poor my English is! I am an English teacher though! (November 20)

Regarding typing fluency, another factor that made the participants feel 'thirsty' while sending messages was the desire to demonstrate even their limited English proficiency. Kim's comment that "I am an English teacher" has cultural connotations. Generally in Korea, teachers are regarded as experts in their areas, and Kim felt that as an English teacher she should be fluent enough to have adequate receptive and productive language skills to be an expert in English. Although she had not been trained in a well-organized, government-supported program that focused on speaking English fluently, it was regarded as the teachers' responsibility to improve their language proficiency. From a traditional perspective in Korea, it is difficult for a teacher not to be able to respond to a student who is waiting for the teacher's answer. A story is told in Korea of how an English teacher armed with grammatical theory and knowledge had to rush to the washroom when a native English speaker visited his school. Therefore, the participants in this study were under stress and felt 'thirsty,' especially in the early stages.

In an interview Jung asked me whether the English expression "You are so brave!" can be used in Canada to encourage students (October 29). I replied that I had heard this kind of comment from one of my classmates when I took a course in Canada. Jung asked me to try to remember the context in which the expression had been used. I could not understand why she was so sensitive to the expression, and she told me that she was still very frustrated by the expression her partner had used during their e-chats. I knew that she was always very careful about her choice of words or phrases during e-chats in English, even when she was having a normal conversation with her friends in Korean. She had been careful about the subtle nuances of words in English after she had heard a story about a Korean student studying abroad:

> I am very afraid of e-chatting actually. Because I know the subtle nuance and the importance of the proper use of vocabulary, I have to be very careful. Let me take an example why I was hesitating in writing English. I have heard of a story from a female English instructor from America. One day a Korean male student said to her that he wanted to be a friend with the instructor. He wanted to use a sort of sophisticated word. After consulting Korean-English dictionary, he found the

> proper good word. He told her that he wanted to be intimate with her. She was so embarrassed because the word *intimate* implies a kind of sexual meaning. (October 29)

The word *brave* can sometimes be used in a similar sense in Korea to refer to a person who challenges something that is beyond his or her ability. The literal meaning of brave is very positive when translated into Korean and when used to describe a person, but the actual connotation is not always positive. Jung's partner told her that she was so brave, and because she was unfamiliar with the English meaning she wondered whether he was teasing her and could not understand whether his attitude towards her and her English proficiency was positive or negative. That is, she thought that her partner might be using the kind of expression used with babies or foreigners. Even though Jung was sure that her partner was very supportive and positive after reading the online dialogue, she was not happy when she read the expression. When he told her that she was brave, it meant that Jung was an active in trying to e-chat in real time with a native speaker of English. But Jung's interpretation of it was not positive. She seemed to be sure that her partner regarded her as a person who was still not qualified to e-chat with him. She decided to show her feelings of embarrassment when she e-mailed Tarry:

> There is a Korean proverb similar to 'Nothing is so bold as a blind mare.' The Korean proverb means that a little dog doesn't know how scary a tiger is. Yes, I'm a just little dog and you are a big tiger! To speak honestly, when I read your letters I was so confused and embarrassed. (October 29)

Tarry was frustrated and a little angry when he received Jung's e-mail (November 12). In his interview Tarry stated that he could not help laughing; however, he could understand her confusion of the use of the word from his experience when he lived in Korea because it seemed to be a typical misunderstanding in communication among people from different cultural and sociolinguistic backgrounds. Scollon and Scollon (2001) pointed out that this kind of misinterpretation often occurs in intercultural communication. They argued that the appropriate use of "the movements of our bodies (called kinesics), our use of space (called proxemics), and our use of time" (p. 156) is necessary to interpret an interlocutor's messages. If the above online dialogue had occurred in a face-to-face interaction, Jung might have synthesized the nonverbal communication cues.

## Cultural Issues

The Korean respondents reported in CMC correspondence the issues of taboos, politeness, and saving face. All of the respondents, including the native English speaking participants, believed that cultural competence can hardly be separated from the field of second-language teaching and learning. The way of communication itself is included in a culture. While corresponding through CMC with their native-speaking partners, the Korean participants considered three issues that they saw as impediments that hindered their intercultural communication. It should be noted here that the difficulties related to cultural issues could be turned into strong benefits for the Korean participants. Through the difficulties that they experienced, they came to realize the cultural differences, which may lead to intercultural competence.

### *Taboos as Sensitive Topics*

> But I sometimes feel offensive when my partner ask me my personal things. I don't like to ask her about her personal things. Particularly it is not a good idea to talk about personal things because I don't have many things to talk to her about my personal things. (interview with Tarry, September 28)

The issue of taboos was regarded as a typical factor that could cause a breach of trust or misunderstanding between the Korean and native English speaking participants. When both sides seemed to recognize the cultural differences and to understand their partners, they sometimes touched on sensitive issues. However, the major problem related to taboos was that the two cultural groups had different taboos. Whereas the native English speaking participants all reported that they felt offended when asked about personal matters by their Korean partners, the Korean participants felt offended when asked about the negative aspects of Korean culture. It seems that the difficulties derived from the tension between collectivism and individualism. In Korea it is not unusual to ask personal questions of someone to whom one wants to get close if they want to build a friendship with each other. Traditionally, in Korea in a face-to-face situation a person should be asked about personal matters such as about one's father, mother, grandparents, the roots of the family, or their jobs only when he/she visits others. This seems to have also held for these virtual visits.

It seems that to all of the native English speaking participants, an individual person should be regarded differently from a group of people (individualism). To the Korean participants the images of family, society, and nation that their partners held reflected themselves (collectivism). For instance, the image of a taxi driver's bad habit might be considered the Korean teacher's habit. Therefore, the Korean participants were very careful about raising sensitive issues that might be related to their partners' home countries. For them, their native-speaking partners' critical views were regarded as important because the opportunities enabled them to know the views of people from English-speaking countries, which was not always possible in an EFL context. Even if they had opportunities to contact native English speaking people on the streets or in language institutes, it was not likely that the native speakers would express their candid opinion on Korean people's views on any issue.

Besides the issue of personal manners, political issues were also sensitive matters. One day, Jung said to Sharon in an e-chat:

> Jung: I knew some Canadian teachers. They were very kind to me. But I don't like American.
> Sharon: Well, I think it doesn't matter what country a person is from because there are nice and bad people in every country
> Jung: Yes, I think so. But I don't like Americans.
> Jung: They are so proud of their country. They invade other countries economically
> Sharon: I have some great American friends and I've also met some I did not like. I don't understand how you can say you don't like an entire people based on a few experiences.
> Sharon: You are basing that on what a government has done, not on an individual basis. A lot of Canadians are the same.
> Jung: If I meet some nice Americans, my thought might be changed.
> Jung: Yes, you are right I hate the US government. (e-chat, January 15)

In the conversation Jung expressed her embarrassment about her partner's negative response. Although Kim said that Canadians (Sharon was from Canada) were very kind and Americans were not, her partner stated that Koreans and Americans are similar. Jung's embarrassment was based on her confusion about why Sharon was sensitive to an issue that was not directly related to her home country. Later, Jung's friend told her that most Canadians are not comfortable in discussing political issues:

> I was confused at the moment why my partner seemed to be angry. Later I recognized that political discussion is not comfortable to the people in Canada. You know, we Koreans like talking about political issues everywhere and anytime. And furthermore, I criticize US not her country. I was confused that she was from America, not from Canada at the time. (January 20)

In our interview Sharon commented on her feelings about the e-chat with Jung: "We had a discussion about Americans and it made me angry because I felt she was being very prejudiced. She has never even talked to an American before! Anyway, that was a very dissatisfying conversation" (January 25).

After the interview I entered the following idea in my reflective journal:

> Listening to Sharon, I was not able to understand the exact reason why she was not satisfied with the conversation with Jung. Jung's 'prejudice' was against America and was not against Canada that was Sharon's home country. I guessed that the reason Sharon felt unsatisfactory might be because she was from Canada located in North America, or because her relatives were living in America. Even if I was not able to identify the reason, Sharon said that the conversation was dissatisfied because of Jung's prejudice. (January 25)

In her interview, when I asked Sharon if she liked to talk about political issues with other Korean friends, she replied "No," except with close friends. It was political issues based on her answer that made her view the conversation as dissatisfying. Talking about political issues in North America could be a taboo that contributed to Jung's difficulty in choosing conversation topics (interview with Jung, January 20) For Jung, it was not easy to recognize what her partner's taboos were.

Korean teachers often felt that they had to apologize when they mentioned sensitive issues to their native-speaking partners, possibly because they perceived that the native English speaking participants were different from the Korean participants in that the native speakers freely commented on and raised sensitive issues and sometimes expressed very negative views on Korean cultures without apology. The native speakers discussed Korean drivers' bad manners and habit of spitting, students' cheating, and the laws in Korea. The Korean participants not only learned something from their partners' critical views, but they also felt embarrassed. They assumed that if issues are sensitive to native speakers, they should not be discussed because this might influence the nonnative speakers' free choice of topic or their decision to change topics. The following is a discussion between Jung and her partner, Sharon:

> Jung: When I studied English in a language institute, I met several English teachers. We students liked more Canadians than Americans.
> Sharon: why?
> Jung: Americans are so arrogant. But Canadians were mild . . . a little similar to Koreans.
> Sharon: I think Americans and Koreans are very similar because you both are so patriotic. Americans are quiet patriots. You guys yell and chant when you see your flag. Like at the World Cup.
> Jung: I knew some Canadian teachers. They were very kind to me. (e-chat, January 15)

Jung changed from one topic to another because she noticed that Sharon was unhappy. Similarly in the above conversation, responding to Jung's comment that Americans are arrogant, Sharon said that Koreans are similar to Americans. Jung said in her interview that she felt that Sharon must have been unhappy with the conversation; otherwise she would not have compared Koreans to Americans (January 20). She e-mailed an apology to Sharon. In the interview Jung stated that what she really wanted to repute was her partner's logic: First, Sharon did not have to be unhappy because she was not an American; second, Korean people's yelling and chanting during the World Cup was so different from being arrogant; third, it was unreasonable for her partner to connect patriotism and arrogance (January 20). However, she could not organize her thoughts in English. Instead, what she could do was to emphasize the kindness of Canadian people rather than to try to convince her partner with a logical argument on the issue. Jung said in the interview that her lack of proficiency in expressing what she wanted to say was the first reason that she could not repute her partner's misconnection between being arrogant and being patriotic. The second reason was that she usually tended to avoid issues that might be sensitive to her partner. She seemed to assume that she should follow the culture of Canadian people because it was English in which they were communicating, even though they were in Korea. As described in the following e-mail that Jung sent to Sharon, Jung hesitated to refute Sharon's logic; instead, she apologized for 'something.'

> After our e-chatting I felt very sorry for my negativity about the US. I found that it was just because of my ignorance about American and my short English. I shouldn't have said that way. I don't know much about America, I don't have any American friends and I never been to America. Few years ago, an American teacher said we Koreans were 'blunt.' If he felt that way, it's entirely owing to lack of vocabulary, I think. I had many experiences like that. When I express my opinions, I sometimes use very simple or wrong words. Because I don't know the

> exact and elegant words, so . . . Sharon, please understand me. (e-mail, January 17)

Jung knew that her partner's home country was Canada and felt that she could say things freely about America. However, Sharon's response was very critical, which led Jung to e-mail Sharon. Jung did not know why her partner was so unhappy, but she felt that she needed to apologize. In her conversation with her partner (January 25), Sharon indicated that she was very frustrated with Jung's negative views on America. I asked the following questions in my reflective journal entries (January 25): If Sharon had expressed negative opinions of the people of countries located near Korea, and if Jung had been unhappy, which was noticed by Sharon, what would have happened? Would Sharon e-mail Jung in order to express her apologies? Who is the minority in this situation when both parties live in Korea and speak English, Jung or Sharon?

Perhaps different cultural or intercultural styles might result in a power hierarchy in communication. It is highly likely that the power of language might dominate the rule of conversation and create new subdominant and dominant people, at least in certain communication. It also seems that the imbalance of language power inhibits the subdominant from expressing his or her thoughts and makes that person unwilling to communicate. Kamhi-Stein (2000) pointed out that CMC is recognized as promoting balanced participation among people who differ in their power of linguistic fluency. In the conversation among nonnative- and native-speaking teachers, language power is an interesting area in communication because they are all experts in education. Freiermuth (2001) explained that equity is an important factor in nonnative and native speakers and that the power relationship is normally derived from "language power relationship, or expert perception" (p. 174).

It is quite common that in face-to-face communication dominant speakers or high-status speakers tend to seize the majority of turns to speak, leaving low-status speakers with fewer opportunities, especially when the speakers are verbally expressing their ideas (Freiermuth, 2001). When I asked the Korean participants whether they saw themselves as experts in teaching English, they answered that they had more knowledge about the area of teaching English than their native-speaking partners did. Similarly in this CMC context, when the Korean and native-speaking participants talked about an area of

teaching English, the native speakers tended to take the lead in suggesting and changing topics and in negotiating for meaning. Among two factors that Kamhi-Stein (2000) and Freiermuth mentioned, language power relationships or language fluency and perceptions of excerpts, it is language power that influenced the Korean participants' perceptions that they had the subdominant status.

Woken and Swales (1989), in their study of native speakers who were being trained by nonnative speakers in training programs, stated that specialists dominate the interaction based upon the recognition of their expertise in spite of their language deficiencies. Except for this special situation, it seems that language power influences more than the communicators' perceptions of experts. It should be noted here that nonnative speakers' *perceived* language proficiency rather than their *actual* language proficiency is a very powerful factor in establishing power relationships between native and nonnative speakers. When two or three months had passed since this study started, the Korean participants began to participate more actively than they had in the beginning. There might have been several reasons for this change, including the trust that the Korean participants built among each other. Their perceived language proficiency contributed to their active participation in communication with the native speakers, which created a more equitable power relationship than in the early stages. As Cifuentes and Shih (2001) showed in their study conducted with preservice teachers in America and Taiwan, even though power relationships can exist between nonnative and native English speakers, CMC could provide an equitable communication compared to face-to-face interaction. However, according to the Korean participants' experiences and perceptions, it seems that the concept of equity should not be expected in the early stages of CMC between nonnative and native speakers.

The topic of religion also emerged as a taboo that was very sensitive to the native English speaking participants. In the following e-mail sent to Jung, Tarry suggested that they should avoid sensitive issues when she began to raise the issue of religion:

> About religion . . . Yes, you are right. Religion and some other topics are based on belief and not on logic, so it is not a good idea to discuss such things. People are offended if you question their beliefs. If you say, "It is impossible to have a flood that covers the whole earth. The story of Noah and the Ark must be just a silly story!" If you say something like this, believers get very angry. It is better to

> discuss 'safer' topics like . . . the weather, hobbies, daily lives, general culture, or something like that. (February 10)

Jung, in an informal group interview, raised a question: What is general culture, and how many taboos remained of which she should be aware to communicate better with her partner? (October 20). The Korean participants' awareness of native speakers' taboos seemed to have not only positive but also negative influences in terms of keeping their conversation active. Positively, the Korean participants came to understand the different culture, which was useful for the next communication. Negatively, they were often hesitant to say something because they needed time to decide whether the topic would be taboo or not to a native speaker. Jung e-mailed Tarry about her confusion about topic choices:

> Actually, I'm not confident of continuing our conversation. I was really sorry for your bad feeling about my country and people. You don't like to talk about yourself, your feeling and your experience in Canada. You don't seem to be interested in any other things in Korea except teaching. Then, how can we feel free to talk? Please tell me what you want to talk about. (October 26)

Responding to Jung's e-mail on the same day, Tarry said that he did not dislike Korea. He called Korea as *Corea* because the letter C symbolizes the more advanced position and because he knew that the original name of Korea was Corea. Furthermore, there are many reasons that why he disliked talking about personal matters, but it was difficult to explain all of them. He felt that general topics such as teaching or culture might be comfortable for both of them, but he thought that all questions should be welcomed. He would try to understand it and ask many questions of Jung (October 26).

Nevertheless, it was hard for Jung to decide whether a certain topic would be accepted by her partner or whether she should move to another topic. In e-chats she did not have enough time to do so compared to e-mails. Furthermore, it was not possible to apologize every time that she touched on sensitive issues without knowing the exact reasons for her partner's unhappiness.

It should be noted here in relation to taboos and language power that Jung was concerned with the possibility of choosing topics that were taboo to Tarry. However, Tarry was not as concerned as Jung was. When Tarry criticized Korean culture for its collectivism, Confucianism, its hierarchical structure, and the Korean War, Jung was not

able to tell Tarry that some of the topics might be very sensitive to Koreans. It seems that in conversations between native and non-native speakers these topics are considered more serious taboos by the nonnative speakers than the native speakers. Nevertheless, as Jung said in an informal group interview (October 20), it was a process of learning a globally powerful language, and it was more crucial for English teachers in Korea to know the language to communicate better with native speakers and to understand the native-speaking culture better.

***Politeness***

> My partner easily moves to another topic even when she asked me first. She asked me about movie, and then suddenly moved to CDs she had bought. (interview with Sharon, January 15)

Sharon raised the issue of politeness with her Korean partner. In her interview Sharon seemed to have been upset about Jung's attitude and felt that her partner too easily and suddenly changed topic, as shown in the following conversation. For Jung it was not impolite to change topics in a normal conversation, but for Sharon it was awkward when her partner asked about movies first, then suddenly moved to the topic of CDs. This example shows Sharon's and Jung's differing perceptions of politeness in their communication with each other:

> Jung: What movie did you watch?
> Sharon: Kill Bill. It was very violent!
> Jung: I hate violent movies.
> Jung: I was happy on Saturday. I bought some music CDs.
> Sharon: This movie was funny, stupid and really bloody. Sometimes I like movies like this.
> Sharon: What CD's?
> Jung: Mozart's. I watch "Amadeus" on TV. (e-chat, January 9)

Sharon felt that it was polite to share mutual interests in a conversation (interview, January 15). Jung suddenly moved to the topic of CDs after only one comment on the movie that Sharon had mentioned. Sharon expected to talk more about movies. However, Jung did not show any interest in the movie topic and said, "I hate violent movies." Sharon saw this as impolite, and in her interview she stated that this conversation made

her feel upset, which influenced their conversation climate. In this atmosphere she might not want to keep talking more; she might want to quit immediately.

Another issue related to politeness emerged from their different views on the length of e-mails. The Korean participants regarded e-mail as a letter in which they would express their feelings sincerely, so the length should be a page or more. Although the length of e-mails has already been discussed in this chapter as it relates to hurt pride, it also relates to the theme of politeness. Having actually read the Korean participants' e-mails, I found that many were longer than one page. To the Korean participants, writing a long e-mail was a way to show their sincerity. In return, they expected a similar length of response from their partners. Writing long e-mails sometimes took one-and-a-half hours, which might be a burden to Korean participants, but "a letter is a letter regardless of e-mail or formal letter" (Shon, November 30).

Shon e-mailed her partner, apologizing for her late response:

> It is my excuse why I couldn't answer to your mails. I still have a little burden on writing something in English. If you were one of my Korean friends I would leave my message shortly even though I was so busy. But I did not think I could do that to you. Tomy, I am so sorry. (How I can show my emotion exactly!) (November 20)

In this e-mail it is clear that Shon regarded Tomy as being in a formal relationship with her. Thus, it was quite natural for her to write a long e-mail to a person who is in this type of relationship. Her e-chatting partner was not a close friend, but they had built a strong sense of trust. In an interview Shon said that they trusted each other very much but that it was still kind of a formal relationship (November 25). In a formal letter the length or style should be formal; however, the three native-speaking partners' views on the length or style differed.

For Tarry, one of the native English speaking participants, a long e-mail was burdensome or too much work. Although Tarry actually began to write longer letters as time passed, he expressed his candid opinion on the length of e-mail to his partner:

> You write such long and wonderful letters. I never write letters! I write long letters lately though. If I were another normal person, I would say like this. You are forcing me to do so! I used to check my e-mail every month, . . . not every day! Now, I try to check it every day. I look and see . . . Oh, no! A letter from

> Jung! On, no! It will be long, and I must read all of it and answer every part! Oh, no!!!! (e-mail, October 15)

Although at the end of the letter Tarry stated that he had finally begun to write long letters, the contents of this e-mail show what he previously felt about the length of e-mail. To Tarry it was kind of burdensome or too much work to answer all of his partner's questions or comments in e-mail. Tarry already knew that Jung would be unhappy with his short e-mail response. He seemed to adapt himself to her view on the amount and frequency of e-mail. His e-mails were becoming longer and longer as time passed. This was an interesting finding because in other cases the Korean participants tended to follow their partners' culture because of the language power. In the interview Tarry stated that his desire to help his partner led him to follow her perceptions on e-mail, which gave him pleasure. However, it seems that writing a long e-mail was still burdensome to Tarry. As time passed, the partners came to understand each other better and made efforts to adjust to each other. Generally, the length of the Korean participants' e-mails remained the same from the beginning to the later stages of the study, and the partners' e-mails were getting longer. It seems that the length of an e-mail depends on the understanding of the two parties (audiences). Generally, the two parties were at the forefront in constructing new rules for digital communication and politeness.

The issue of politeness can be seen in the following example as well. Jung was upset about her partner's manner of e-chatting:

> What a terrible reason it was! She made me wait for her for thirty minutes in the middle of our e-chats. She did not give me any reason. She just disappeared. I thought that something happened to her. In thirty minutes, he logged on again and said that she was busy for searching some information for her friend. Actually she was e-chatting with two e-chatters including me at the same time. Her excuse was really funny and I was very angry. You know, I am much older than she is. She should not able to neglect me. (interview, February 15)

Jung's disappointment was based on the seniority system in Korea. Her statement that "I am much older than she is" represents the traditional Korean concept that juniors should respect their seniors. Sometimes online communicators converse with two or more others at the same time; when one is very good at composing, it is quite possible to have multiple online e-chats simultaneously. In this case it is also quite possible that one will

make the other wait for a while. This normal situation cannot be allowed in conversation between seniors and juniors in Korea.

In the above interview Jung complained that Sharon had e-chats with another friend at the same time as with Jung even though Jung is senior to her partner. Generally, online etiquette calls for polite vocabulary or expressions, but online communicators sometimes encounter informal expressions or offensive or bold language. However, Jung's situation was not about the kind of language used; rather, it was about a lack of manners, etiquette, or politeness because Sharon made Jung wait for a while without being told that Sharon was multitasking. Even though they had e-chat rules, they sometimes broke the rules, which made the other side feel frustrated.

Although there were no offensive words in the conversations between Sharon and Jung, they needed to observe other e-chatting etiquette such as that shown in the example below. Even though one benefit of online interaction is that "interactants do not worry about outside factors that interfere with listening and speaking" (Freiermuth, 2001, p. 190), these factors also create a disadvantage for the communicators in online chatting because there are no visual cues to indicate what the interlocutor is doing. Especially in conversations among people from different cultures, they should be more considerate than when they engage in conversation with people from the same culture. As Jung stated, the factor that made her more angry was that her partner was younger than she was, and age difference is crucial in social life, communication, speech style—in all ways of living in Korea.

> Jung: I think you liked teaching in Korea. Will you quit teaching here after a year? Or do you want to teach for more years?
> Jung: Sharon?
> Jung: Do you have a class now?
> Jung: Are you busy?
> Jung: Do you have a problem with your computer?
> Jung: I'm waiting . . . waiting . . .
> Sharon: I'm here. Sorry I'm back. (e-chat, February 10)

To Jung it was an embarrassing moment (interview, February 15). While waiting for her partner, she was afraid that something might have happened to Sharon. On hearing Sharon's excuse that she was looking for information for her friend on the Internet, Jung was angry and thought about Sharon's attitude toward her for two weeks after this

unpleasant e-chat. Jung said in the interview that she felt foolish because of her feeling of being neglected by Sharon. While waiting for Sharon's message, Jung had to stare at the computer screen without doing anything.

In an interview Sharon said that it was undeniable that she felt a little bored in e-chatting with her partner for several reasons, such as Jung's lack of English proficiency or having to wait a long time for a response (February 18). In her interview Jung said that her feeling of being neglected was not a small thing. She told me again that she thought about quitting the e-chat, but she did not want it to influence my research. Eventually, Sharon's habit of making her partner wait without notice resulted in a two-week halt in their exchange of e-mails and e-chats.

***Saving Face***

> Jung's reluctance to e-chat shows a basic Korean desire to avoid embarrassment through error. She has been trained by her experience as a teacher in Korea to avoid situations wherein she might make a mistake or reveal a lack of knowledge. This is why attempts to bring conversational English do not work - for the most part - in Korea. It is more the fault of the teachers than the students. The teachers are afraid to make mistakes. (interview with Tarry, December 21)

"Face is the negotiated public image, mutually granted each other by participants in a communicative event" (Scollon & Scollon, 2001, p. 45). Scollon and Scollon pointed out that the concept of face is not unfamiliar to Asian people and explained the concept of face as an honor to the Chinese, the Japanese, and Koreans in interpersonal relationships (in Korean, *chae myon*).

The three native-speaking teachers of English commonly took for granted that the Korean teachers were afraid of making mistakes and that the teachers were afraid to tell their students that they did not know the answer to a question. The native English speaking participants believed that these phenomena might be because the Korean teachers were conditioned that way. Thus, Tarry felt that it was one of the main reasons that the Korean teachers might stay very close to the text and not encourage questions in or about English from their students (December 21). In the interview Tarry believed that his former partner, Jung, seemed to be very much a product of this conditioning. Tarry said that it would be a negative influence not only on their smooth communication, but also on the improvement of the Korean participants' English proficiency.

Tarry also provided an example that related to his current partner's efforts to save face in the virtual space:

> Tarry: I have a question.
> Kim: yes?
> Tarry: Do you often 'edit' your writing in our e-chats?
> Tarry: That is, do you write something, and then erase, and start again?
> Kim: edit? What do you mean? Oh! Yes. If I am late or wrong, I used to erase it.
> Tarry: Aha! That explains some strange messages that I often get.
> Kim: what kind of?
> Tarry: Well, . . . the computer tells me that you are writing . . . and then you stop . . . but no message comes . . . and then the computer tells me that you are writing again.
> Tarry: Sometimes this happens several times before a message comes. I was just curious!
> Kim: That occurs not only when I found my grammatical errors or strange sentences that I myself could not make a sense, but also when I thought that I had to answer your second message before I had not responded your first message.
> Tarry: Hahahaha! Just send me any messages without editing, please. (e-chat, December 28)

Contrary to the e-mail writing process, communicators in e-chats generally do not have time to think, edit, or revise their messages. In e-mail writing, the Korean participants had enough time to look up words in the dictionary, correct errors, and reread all of their sentences to make sure that they were clear. In e-chat there is just one audience waiting for the writer's messages, which requires that he/she formulate ideas quickly. To Tarry, waiting required more patience, which was more difficult than reading error-laden messages. With regard to the editing issue, all three native English speaking participants agreed that it was a result of the Korean teachers' efforts to save face.

The native-speaking respondents to some extent tried to encourage their Korean partners not to be afraid of making mistakes and not to worry about saving face. In an interview Tarry was also curious about the reason that his partner was afraid of making mistakes:

> I don't think that any amount of encouragement on my partner will change her attitude. I am an anonymous person somewhere in Pusan, or Korea, and yet she is afraid of giving offence, or making a mistake. (January 25)

Tarry felt that because he was an unknown person to his partner, Kim did not have to worry about saving face. However, it was a different story. Although they had never met,

they already knew well each other and had received a great deal of information about each other through CMC. Furthermore, it was highly possible that they could meet face-to-face because they worked in the same field. This was a special CMC context for these participants compared to other CMC in which there was little possibility of meeting each other because they used pennames. Furthermore, the fact that their online dialogue would be read and analyzed by the researcher might be a big burden to save face. Teachers in Korea especially are accustomed to social expectations that teachers behave as perfect role models. The concept of saving face seems to have been a preoccupation of the Korean participants in my study in CMC conversations with native English speaking partners just as it would be in a face-to-face context in Korea.

**Technological Issues**

> p.s. I tried to send this to you about an hour ago, but got a message from the postmaster saying that it wasn't delivered. I hope it reaches you this time.
>
> p.p.s. Okay. I wrote this letter to you yesterday morning. I just copied and pasted the original message. This is now the third time that I have tried to send it to you. Last night, I was going to try to send it to you from home, but my computer was not working. (e-mail from Tomy, October 30)

Tomy told me his story about difficulty in sending e-mail messages to Shon (November 12). Tomy checked his e-mail box and found that two e-mails that he had sent to his partner had been returned. It had been two weeks since he had sent them, and the e-mails should have been delivered to her a week before. Tomy copied and pasted the messages again and sent them in his third mail. An hour later he received a message from the postmaster that said that his mail had not been delivered again. Tomy worried that his partner might think that she was being neglected. He tried to send an instant message using *MSN Messenger*, but his partner did not log on, and he could find no alternative way of reaching her. In a situation in which both sides have no other means of contacting each other than CMC, unnecessary misunderstandings can occur if either side (mainly the Korean participants) believes that the other party is bored and does not want to continue the CMC. These misunderstandings were mentioned to me several times in the interviews with the Korean participants.

Tarry similarly reported that his mail had been returned several times for no identified reason. There had been no problem in sending and receiving e-mails between *Hotmail* accounts. Tarry also could not find a way to contact his partner for two weeks and sent me an e-mail:

> Mr. Lee. I just sent a message to you at your *hanmail* address. It was not delivered. Only *hotmail* will work. Please tell 'Kim' to get a *hotmail* address and assure her that I have not been ignoring her.
>
> Please let me know as quickly as you can if this message gets through a message from a *'hotmail'* account. Please try to find out why *hanmail* is rejecting my messages. It may be a fault in their anti-spam programme. (February 4)

The participants reported several technological problems. First, their partners' mailboxes were full and hence the messages were returned. These technological problems sometimes caused unnecessary misunderstandings that possibly broke their mutual trust.

The second problem related to technological issues was the accessibility to Internet. The native English speaking participants had more difficulty related to technological issues because two of them did not have access to the Internet at their homes. They intended to stay in Korea temporarily, so they thought that they did not need to have Internet at their homes. The native speakers' difficulties were directly related to the problems of the Korean participants, because they sometimes needed to e-chat after school. For example, one of the native English speaking participants, Tomy, went to a PC room (Internet café) 20 minutes away from his apartment on foot. He was supposed to have an e-chat with his partner, Shon, at 5:30 p.m. after school. His school was usually over at 5:00, and it took 15 minutes to get to his house. Although he did not have the Internet at home, he had expected to use the Internet at one PC room near his apartment, but when he passed by, he found that the PC room was closed. It was raining, and he did not have an umbrella with him that day; he could not go to his house to get an umbrella because the time to chat was approaching. There were just 10 minutes left. He began to walk along the road to find another PC room somewhere in the city, and he was soaking wet when he reached one. He sat down in front of one computer and started downloading *MSN Messenger*. However, it took a long time to download *MSN Messenger* at this PC room, and then while he downloaded the program, the computer suddenly shut down. He tried to fix the problem, but all of the help messages were written in Korean, which he

could not understand. The thought that his partner was waiting for him to log on made him annoyed too. At last he managed to log on and was ready to e-chat. Tomy felt stressed, but, he thought, an appointment is an appointment. He began to e-chat, but he wanted to stop and to return home. The climate of the communication on that day was therefore much different from that of their normal e-chats. From the beginning the native speaker's messages said "Hi," "Busy?" or "No," which were very simple conversations, and Tomy felt that the climate of the communication was not very warm. After a couple of message changes and explanations about his frustration, he felt that he had better quit e-chatting for the day, and he left the PC room.

Generally, the difficulties that the participants in this study encountered were similar to those in other CMC studies, such as an overloaded online system, a lack of online services, difficulties in making connections, modem or accessibility problems, and technical failure of servers or computer (Nunan, 1999; Singhal, 1998; Tiene, 2000).

**Time Issues**

> To my partner, the best chat time was after 10:00 P.M. on Thursdays and Sundays, or any time after 6:00 P.M. on the other days. It means he was willing to have chats with me everyday. Unfortunately, I had lots of work after 6 o'clock during weekdays. (e-mail from Kim, November 20)

The time arrangement for e-mail writing was comparatively easier than for e-chats, which was difficult to all of the participants including the native English speakers. Although all participants did their best to arrange times for e-chats, it was not always easy because of their unique work routines during and after school.

Kim did not want to have e-chats after school because, as a newlywed, she felt that it was hard for her to have e-chats with a 'stranger' when her husband was sitting by her side at home.

Time was also an issue to the other participants, as indicated by Jung:

> Time! The most difficulty is to find out the time for e-chat available to both of us. I do not mean simply the absolute amount of time, but the matching time to e-chat with each other. When he had a bit free time to e-chat, I was busy, vice versa. (interview, September 7)

English teachers in elementary schools in Korea work from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. They usually have only four classes a day, so it is not difficult for them to find time for e-chatting. The problem was that when one had free time for e-chatting, the other was in class. At home the female teachers usually do housework after school until the dishes are washed after dinner. In addition, the Korean teachers sometimes were unexpectedly asked to have make-up classes:

> I was waiting for him to log on. I was sitting in front of my computer in my office. I was supposed to have e-chats with my partner last Wednesday. Suddenly one instant message appeared on the screen of the computer that said, "I am sorry that I have a make-up class," . . . things like that. In the evening he e-mailed me with his schedules of this week and possible free time for e-chats. Unfortunately, almost of his free time was exactly matching with my busy time. So I could not help saying I was very sorry (interview with Kim, November 20)

As Kim suggested, it would be desirable for English teachers to have regular e-chatting time during school time. Kim and the other Korean participants said that they would have more time to have e-chats during winter vacation than on normal school days. However, during winter vacation all of the participants had busy schedules that involved traveling, camping, and visiting relatives. It was very different from what they had expected, so they sometimes had e-chats on Saturday, Sunday, or even in the middle of night. Though Denning (1997) stated that CMC is a way of overcoming time difficulties, it is understandable that more difficulties arise with CMC than in face-to-face interactions. In particular, synchronous CMC requires that communicators correspond with each other at the same time, which cause difficulties.

### Ethical Issues

> Although my partner told me that he would be ready to answer me all the time except for the time when he was log-off, I sometimes felt sorry to his wife. Especially when I had e-chats in the middle of night, I could not help being conscious of his wife. I had thought whether it would be possible or not for me to enjoy e-chats with a male partner privately, if I were not participating in CMC project in a kind of official way. (interview with Shon, February 25)

Korea is recognized as a more conservative society than those of Western countries. Online e-chatting has caused many problematic situations among adults and adolescents, and newspapers and TV shows have dealt with the social issues in a very

negative way. A great many cases of infidelity have arisen through Internet e-chats between adults., which has been reported by newspapers and other media. Many commercial Internet sites have been created for this purpose, and therefore Internet e-chats are not always viewed positively by people in Korea. In this research the female Korean participants could not be totally free of awareness of this kind of social issue even though they were participating in the research 'in an official way.'

In this situation, when the Korean participants gave their partners useful information for traveling to beautiful sites in Korea and suggested that they would like to guide their partners someday, the essential comment that should have been added was "with your wife." As Shon stated, "I would like to give you a ride to the place, if your wife wants to" (interview, October 25)

Because of the lack of common free time during the day, the participants sometimes had e-chats in the middle of night. In the early stages of the research, they usually arranged e-chat time through e-mail. If there were factors that hindered them from keeping their appointments for e-chats, such as technological problems or something unexpected, then they often used instant messaging to agree on a time. If they were online together, they often e-chatted at the moment or arranged the next e-chat time. However, having e-chats in the middle of the night seemed to be unreasonable to the participants, especially when their spouses were reading the e-chat dialogue:

> Tomy: Is that you, Shon?
> Shon: Yes. You are Tomy?
> Tomy: Yeah. My wife was on the computer and said you were online.
> Shon: Do I interrupt your wife?
> Tomy: No, she's finished now. I just wanted to say hi. We're going to bed.
> Shon: Just before I said hello to you, but I knew your wife was on the computer, because no one answer to me.
> Tomy: If I don't answer, that means it's my wife. I will always answer you.
> Tomy: Anyway, sorry, my wife wants me in bed early tonight. (October 8)

It was 10:00 p.m. on October 8th when Tomy and Shon were e-chatting through the instant messenger program. Shon had not had e-chats during the two previous week or made any e-mail exchanges and attempted to have e-chats at night. When she logged onto *MSN Messenger*, she found that her partner was already logged on. However, there was no response from Tomy even 10 minutes after her first message. When both were

logged on and had their addresses registered in their address books, one could easily see that his or her instant message had appeared on the other's computer screen. In this case no response meant that the other was not available to respond to the message. Ten minutes later Shon realized that Tomy's wife was reading the message and that Tomy needed to go to bed, which made Shon feel sorry about her interruption of Tomy's happy time with his wife (interview, October 25).

In this case it could have been a gender issue. What Shon felt at the moment was not the same as when she was e-chatting with a female. Even though she had never e-chatted with her native English speaking partner before, she often enjoyed e-chatting with her friends in Korea even in the middle of the night. In Korea e-chatting in the middle of the night with one's friend who is of the same gender is acceptable; however, in the reverse case it would be perceived differently.

Besides the difficulties that the Korean participants reported in relation to ethical issues, it was often a burdensome feeling when one's partner said "I am lonely" in their e-chats or e-mails. Of course, even though the partner might have clarified that living in a foreign country alone without his/her family was lonely, he/she could be a little sensitive to the nuance of the sentence.

Other problems that the participants reported included environmental hindrances such as unexpected extra work, phone calls or people coming to the door unexpectedly, and sudden physical illness. Because of the many difficulties, the participants were hopeful that the time for e-chats would be set and guaranteed in an official way. Because the Korean participants recognized the necessity of CMC with the native English speakers, and their school colleagues who often observed their CMC were jealous of their opportunities to correspond with their native-speaking partners, the necessity of CMC for non-native English teachers in EFL contexts seemed unquestionable.

As all of the Korean participants stated, ways of overcoming the difficulties that they had had during the research period should be explored for other nonnative-speaking teachers of English.

# CHAPTER 5

## BENEFITS

Although they had various difficulties during their CMC correspondence with their native-speaking partners, the Koreans believed that they also benefited from the experience. When I began this research, I expected that they would benefit from the CMC experience as language learners and as language teachers separately. However, all of the participants agreed that the benefits to them as language learners and language teachers were inseparable in that the two were mutually beneficial. They also felt that the difficulties that they had could be connected to the benefits to them as language teachers because they provided them with opportunities to envision the difficulties that their students might have in class. In other words, looking back at their roles as language learners through these CMC experiences, they were able to better understand their students. In short, all of the difficulties and benefits from these CMC experiences as both language learners and language teachers were worthwhile to the Korean participants.

As language learners, the Korean participants were able to develop their own strategies to overcome the difficulties, which included language breakdown because of their lack of communicative competence. That is, they could learn not only language itself, but also strategies. Looking back at her CMC experience in the final informal group interview, Shon stated what she perceived as benefits through overcoming the difficulties she had had:

> Shon: For me, sometimes I had two hour-long e-chats. After e-chatting, I was surprised that two hours had already passed. Already! The problem was that I felt very thirsty and tired during and after e-chatting. It was not a relax time. It was a kind of a sauna. Sometimes I was exhausted and I was not bored because I did not have a time to feel bored. It was like taking an exam to me, testing my English proficiency and my pride by myself. One more thing I want to say is that I sometimes hurt my pride, even though I don't know my partner, and I never met him. I knew I did not have to have a burden of how I would be looked like to him. I knew that I did not have to keep my face. I still don't know why I felt so anxious during e-chatting with him in the no-face meeting. However, through the time of much anxiety, I have got my confidence, and developed my strategies of how to manage those difficulties. (February 25)

Overall, the participants agreed that, first, the various benefits came from their opportunities for one-to-one interaction with native speaking teachers of English. Second, the benefits arose from the fact that they could choose topics among their daily life experiences such as their hobbies, interests, and teaching experiences rather than topics that were predetermined by any external conditions. Shon had had a great deal of experience in learning English from native English speakers in private English academies in Korea, and she explained the differences between learning in this CMC experience and learning in her experience at a language academy:

> First of all, the students in the academy are various in terms of their school background, interests, hobbies, so English teachers cannot choose topics that each of the students wants to talk about. In CMC, I can choose topic what I want to discuss. Even when my partner moves to another topic, I can link it to my experiences. Secondly, the words, phrases, sentences, which were corrected, revised, rephrased by my partner and by myself have remained in my long memory, because those were what I willingly wanted to say, and what I wanted to mean. Thirdly, all the students in a language academy should follow the lecturer and the lecturer can give me a limited chance to talk with him or her. How many opportunities could I have for asking and answering about what I want to know? Those ones are very salient differences between the two. (interview, January 15)

All of the participants agreed that their English proficiency had improved from this experience, but they could not clearly determine how much and to what extent. Their perceptions of their own English improvement were derived from the following benefits: improved self-confidence, authentic English learning, a willingness to communicate, intercultural understanding, and the opportunity for professional development.

### Improvement of Self-Confidence: No More Dictionaries

> I do not need a dictionary any more in communication with my partner. I can ask him about what I want to know and he answers me. When I cannot think of the words or phrases that I want to say, I use them in return as a good starting point to talk with him. That is, I do not worry about the lack of topics we are going to discuss, because the difficult word or phrase for me is also altered to a kind of topic for both of us. Furthermore I do not worry about my mistakes anymore now, because making errors or mistakes is not a big deal in communication. Communication is a communication! (interview with Shon, January 15)

Shon, a Korean participant, remembered how anxious she had felt at the beginning of her e-chats with her native-speaking partner. She always brought a

dictionary or used an Internet dictionary when she had difficulty in finding the proper words to express herself. This caused a lag in time, which forced her partner not only to wait for some time, but also to easily move to other topics. If the other party changes the topic while one is composing on a previous topic, it sometimes creates confusion in their conversation.

Shon also tried to make sure that her messages were grammatically correct and spent some time editing, correcting, revising her own sentences, and reading them again before sending them. She was able to take only one turn in talking, whereas her partner had two or three turns. At last she realized that these efforts were not very conducive to a natural flow in conversation. She also recognized that the expressions that she needed to know could be negotiated with her partner. Shon's improvement in her self-confidence seemed to derive from the opportunity to negotiate meaning and communication strategies.

***Through Negotiation of Meaning***

> The negotiation of meaning can be seen as a device for inducing deep processing, both because it provides more processing time and because it creates the conditions under which learners can establish links between unfamiliar items in the input and their existing knowledge. (Ellis, 1999, p. 29)

Negotiation of meaning is a particular kind of interaction (Ellis, 1999) that consists of mainly "confirmation checks (*Is this what you mean*?), comprehension checks (*Do you understand? Do you follow me?*), and clarification of requests (*What? Huh?*)" (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p. 274) These authors emphasized the crucial role of negotiation of meaning in language learning rather than comprehensible input to language learners.

Gass and Selinker (2001) believed that merely comprehensible input is not enough for successful second-language learning because there also needs to be opportunity for "language production or output" (p. 277). The authors focus on (a) the opportunity for the production of language forces learners to use language knowledge in a productive way; and (b) the production is generally seen as a way not only to practice one's existing knowledge, but also to create new knowledge.

The opportunity for negotiation of meaning through the CMC experience seemed to foster self-confidence in the Korean participants. They perceived the opportunities for

interaction as the most valuable experience to them. Through talking with the Korean participants, I recognized that self-confidence was the most important factor and the basis for successful communication when they were using CMC with native-speaking partners. The lack of self-confidence made them hesitant at the beginning of the research, but as time passed, they began to have more confidence. Self-confidence also lessened the level of anxiety, which is recognized as a hindrance in the second language learning process (Northon, 2000). Dörnyei (1998) defined *self-confidence* as a self-perception of communicative competence and emphasized its importance in successful second-language learning. The improvement in the Korean participants' perceptions of their communicative competence seemed to be achieved through the negotiation of meaning in the one-to-one interactions with native-speaking teachers.

As shown in Jung and Sharon's online e-chat, negotiation of meaning made their conversation flow more smoothly:

> Sharon: What about the normal kids that are very weak in school?
> Jung: When they are going to higher school, they have much trouble in studying. They give up learning.
> Sharon: In Canada, we have teaching aids that are assigned to students that need extra help.
> Jung: Teaching aids? Material?
> Sharon: Teaching aids are people who help the students 1-1
> Some volunteers teach them.
> Jung: but they don't need to learn any more. Does it make sense?
> Sharon: What do you mean?
> Jung: They usually don't have any desire for learning at schools. (December 26)

In the preceding dialogue, 'teaching aids' was not fully understood by Jung because generally 'teaching aids' is used to mean 'teaching material' instead of a person. When Sharon said, "In Canada we have teaching aide that are assigned to students that need extra help," it was difficult for Jung to understand that teaching material alone, without a teacher's help, could be assigned to students who need extra help. Recognizing what Jung did not understand through her confirmation check, Sharon clarified that "teaching aids are people." Jung's second negotiation of meaning was used to see whether Sharon followed her: She used the comprehension check "Does it make sense?" It seemed to her that Sharon would not understand 'but they don't need to learn any more" because the message was not directly related to 'teaching aids' at the current moment. As Jung

expected, Sharon was not able to understand and asked what Jung meant using a clarification check: "What do you mean?" It was a typical negotiation of meaning, as Gass and Selinker (2001) explained: Checks and clarifications are the main types of negotiation in interpersonal interactions and are recognized as crucial factors in second-language learning.

The Korean respondents believed that it was the meaningful interactions that provided them with the opportunities to ask what they wanted to know and saying what they meant when they discussed the topics in which they were interested. They also attributed their growing self-confidence to the greater number of interactions that they had that might have not occurred in language classrooms. In classrooms language learners do not have as many opportunities for interactions with teachers because the both are not always engaged in one-to-one interactions.

Lightbown and Spada (1999) argued that when language learners have the opportunity to engage in meaningful interactions, they are highly involved in negotiation of meaning. They stated that negotiation of meaning involves activities in which the learners have the opportunity to request or clarify their opinions, thoughts, or beliefs in order to reach mutual understanding through overcoming communication breakdowns. Negotiation of meaning is accomplished through a variety of modifications such as confirmation checks, clarifications or requests, and comprehension checks. Chapelle (2001) investigated the relationship between the opportunity to negotiate meaning and second-language learning and found that modified interaction contributed to the improvement of second language learners' achievement on words, phrases, and comprehension ability.

As Sharon and Jung pointed out, the ways of negotiating meaning to accomplish mutual understanding created more comprehensible input and output. In the preceding example they talked about the way of helping students who needed extra support, in which they were both interested and which Jung remembered as a meaningful interaction (interview, January 5). Jung said in the interview that she was reminded of the importance of topic selection in conversation with native English speakers, because her desire to express her ideas depends on to what extent she is interested in the topic.

Opportunities for negotiation of meaning seemed to increase Jung's self-confidence, which promoted more meaningful interaction.

***Through Communication Strategies***

> I don't know how much improvement of English proficiency I have achieved. I had some problems to deliver what I meant to him. But in the case, I paraphrased the sentences into easier English in order to make it clear. And I recognized that just one word replacement enabled him to understand very easily. Now, I have confidence in communicating with my partner. No problem! (interview with Shon, October 20)

Shon's recognized 'paraphrasing' and 'one word replacement' as a communication strategy. Many times second-language learners face difficulties in expressing their ideas because of their lack of language resources (Gass & Selinker, 2001). According to Gass and Selinker, learners use their existing language resources to get their meaning across by using communication strategies. It is the learner's intentional attempt to convey the meaning as clearly as possible when he/she is faced with difficulties. As Shon mentioned in her interview (October 20), the words, chunks, idioms, and her existing resources emerged in her mind at the same time to help her to get her ideas across. Communication strategies are important to second-language learners because they provide them with the opportunity to maximize their existing language knowledge to overcome problems derived from their limited language resources (Ellis 1999).

However, in a group discussion the opportunities to use communication strategies can be more limited; one-to-one interactions provide more opportunities. Generally, successful communication requires self-confidence when language learners are involved in conversation with native speakers. That is, self-confidence is recognized as a prerequisite for the learners to engage in the communication. However, Shon gained self-confidence through the process of actively engaging communication strategies (interview, October 20) This is not to say that she developed communication strategies by bringing self-confidence to the communication, but rather that opportunities to use communication strategies are prerequisites for gaining self-confidence.

The following example is the online dialogue between Shon, a Korean participant, and her native-speaking partner Tomy:

> Shon: Really? How can I say this situation in English, Well we call it '인연' in Buddhism.(That means you had some relationships with him in ex-life)
> Tomy: I've heard the Korean expression before. Depending on the circumstances, there may be a number of expressions in English. But I think, in this case, you could say, "What a coincidence."
> Shon: Do you mean 'coincidence' is '인연' in Korean? Coincidence is like happening …
> Tomy: Well, yes and no.
> Shon: It is near to coincidence, but we add more meaningful feeling on it. The 'coincidence' and '인연' has something big different between them. The latter implies that a phenomenon is supposed to happen because of some connection '연' between cause and effect. You see?
> Tomy: Yes. Does it have something to do with rubbing shoulders or brushing by one another unknowingly on a previous occasion?
> Shon: How you know that expression? Is there that kind of expressions in English?
> Tomy: I don't think there is one particular expression. However, we would be able to describe the circumstances and convey the feeling in our own way, but it would require a bit more explanation. (e-chat, October 12)

Shon and Tomy were talking about *karma*. The words '인연'(*in-yeon*) and coincidence have slightly different meanings. The former is related to a consequential result, and the latter is related to an incidental result. Shon did not try to look up the word in a dictionary; instead, she tried to solve the problem by using various communication strategies. Shon attempted to overcome the communication problem (*the English word for '인연'*) in such as way that she used an alternative language form of expression such as *circumlocution* (e.g., "That means you had some relationships with him in ex-life"; describing the characteristics of the key words), language switch (e.g., "happening"), literal translation ("connection, '연'; *yeon*-"between cause and effect") to convey her intended meaning. Boulima (1999) stressed that it is important to develop and use communication strategies to be a good language learner. Even though Shon and Tomy were not able to reach the communication goal they sought, they made sequential collaborative efforts in meaning making.

Again, all of the Korean respondents believed that the benefits they received from CMC came from their one-to-one interaction opportunities in a collaborative learning environment. This environment encouraged the participants to actively use communication strategies. Collaborative learning requires a language learner's active

engagement and the other's appropriate assistance. In the preceding dialogue assistance was possible with the native-speaking partner's help and comprehensible input that were appropriate to the Korean participant's existing language competence. Shon and Tomy were struggling to find the correct English word for '인연' (*in-yeon*)which provided them with the time to practice and produce new language forms in a more creative way than they could have in a more structured language context.

I will provide a list of strategies that second language speakers use and then give examples of some of the ones that are evident in my data. The inventory and descriptions of it listed below is based on the nice review of taxonomies in Dornyei and Scott's study (1997; pp. 188-194).

1. Message abandonment

Description: Leaving a message unfinished because of some language difficulty

Examples: Shon: What veggies do you like the best? I like cucumbers here.

Jung: I like 'Ssam'…*I eat…I don't know the name of the veggy.*

Shon: Is it white? (Shon and Sharon, November 19th)

2. Message reduction (Topic avoidance)

Description: Reducing the message by avoiding certain language structures or topics considered problematic language wise or by leaving out some intended elements for a lack of linguistic resources.

Examples: Kim: What does it mean 'neurotic?'

Tarry: It is very difficult to explain. Jack Nicolson was too worried about little things that would not bother most people.

Kim: Yes, *walking street and ordering food….etc.*

Tarry: Exactly. (Kim and Tarry, December 2nd)

3. Use of all-purpose words

Description: Extending a general, "empty" lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking.

Examples: Jung: We visited a school and gave the students *some school things* we bought in Korea. (Jung and Sharon, February 16th)

4. Literal translation (transfer)

Description: translating literally a lexical item, an idiom, a compound word or structure from L1/L3 to L2.

Example: Tomy: If you don't have a dryer, you should think about getting one.

Shon: I don't have dryer. Your clothes *don't need to be stretched.* (Shon and Tomy, June 19th)

5. Code switching (language switching)

Description: including L1/L3 words with L1/L3 pronunciation in L2 speech; this may involve stretches of discourse ranging from single words to whole chunks and even complete turns.

Example: Shon: I got your message about "*Hagwons*" [Private Academy] (Shon and Tomy, May 6th)

6. Omission

Description: Leaving a gap when not knowing a word and carrying on as if it had been said.

Example: Kim: I bought portable *election..elecric*...dictionary two years ago.

Tarry: Electronic dictionary

Kim: Ah, Yes. Some of my students have those ones. (Kim and Tarry, December 11th)

7. Self-repair

Description: Making self-initiated correction in one's own speech.

Example: Shon: I have to go to a funeral of my colleague's dead after work.

Shon: *dead --dad.* (Shon and Tomy, May 6th)

8. Other repair

Description: Correcting something in the interlocutor's speech.

Example: Shon: Hospital food and service area food on the highway are worsest.

Tomy: *Worst*

Shon: Sorry, right. *Worst* (bad-worse-worst). (Shon and Tomy, June 17th)

9. Self-rephrasing

Description: Repeating a term, but not quite as it is, but by adding something or using paraphrase.

Example: Shon: Before we had economic crisis in 1997, *we called it IMF...International monetary fund situation*. (Shon and Tomy, October 3rd)

10. Over-explicitness (waffling)

Description: Using more words to achieve a particular communicative goal than what is considered normal in similar L1.

Example: Kim: I am so *stuffy. I can't understand...I can't express what I think in my mind...that I have the thing to say*... (Kim and Tarry, December 4th)

11. Verbal strategy markers

Description: Using verbal marking phrases before or after a strategy to signal that the word or structure does not carry the intended meaning perfectly in the L2 code.

Example: Tomy: Oh, so it was first Korea movie? I didn't know that.

Shon: *I can't translate the title of that movie in English. Maybe it can be translated* "Run away with money", *but I am not sure*. (Shon and Tomy, June 5th)

12. Direct appeal for help

Description: Turning to the interlocutor for assistance by asking an explicit question concerning a gap in one's L2 knowledge.

Example: Shon: I don't know to indicate that word in English. *Is it a school day*?

Tomy: We call it Sports Day. (Shon and Tomy, October 16th)

13. Asking for clarification

Description: Requesting explanation of an unfamiliar meaning.

Example: Tarry: I bought a special Pepero for my T.A. for 20000 Won.

Kim: Teacher and....*Who is T.A*?

Tomy: Teaching Assistant. (Kim and Tarry, November 1st)

14. Asking for confirmation

Description: Requesting confirmation that one heard or understood something correctly.

Example: Tarry: Most of the modern books are what I call, 'eye-candy'

Kim: *Eye-candy means that it looks god at sight*? Or … (Kim and Tarry, November 18th)

15. Experiencing non-understanding

Description: Expressing that one did not understand something properly either verbally or nonverbally.

Example: Tarry: Well, I am beginning to get 'Cabin fever'

Kim: 'Cabin fever?'

Tarry: It happens to people that are isolated for too long

Kim: *Sorry, I cannot catch up with you...*

Tarry: My isolation is self-imposed

Kim*: I can not understand you exactly*...(Kim and Tarry, December 4th)

16. Comprehension check

Description: Asking questions to check that the interlocutor can follow you.

Example: Tarry: I am chuckling. *Do you know that word?*

Kim: No

Tarry: it is a kind of quiet, gentle laughter. (Kim and Tarry, December 11th)

17. Own Accuracy check

Description: Checking that what you said was correct by asking a concrete question or repeating a word with a question intonation.

Example: Shon: I understand the other teacher's situation. I can *put me under their shoes (?)* but I am little bit angry at them. (Shon and Tomy, November 21st)

18. Response: rephrase

Description: Rephrasing the trigger.

Example: Tarry: The difficult part is when my students don't learn

Kim: What does it mean "when my students don't learn?"

Tarry: Sometimes they are too busy with other studies or they are worried about something that is happening at home...or maybe they just hate school.

Kim: Oh, I see when I was student, I did.

Tarry: *I did...what? Hate school?*

Kim: *No, sometimes I was lazy*. (Kim and Tarry, December 2nd)

19. Response Confirm

Description: Confirming what the interlocutor has said or suggested.

Example: Kim: I think it is Spum bank

Tarry: Sperm bank?

Kim: *That is right*! (Kim and Tarry, December 10th)

In general, Korean learners view learning English through interaction with native speakers in a language academy as one of the best ways. However, the participants in this study reported that opportunities to use communication strategies through one-to-one interaction can hardly be expected in a traditional language classes even though this much on the tasks that are used in the classes recently, because, in a full-group discussion, opportunities to ask and answer tend to be limited. That is, opportunities to speak and listen with native speakers of English are guaranteed in one-to-one CMC.

**Learning Authentic English**

The second major theme that the participants reported in relation to the benefits of using CMC was gaining opportunities to learn authentic English. To them, many of the English expressions that their partners used were very different from what they had learned in English classes in school or in language institutes. All of the participants had learned what is called *standard* and *formal* English in their middle school to university education. However, during CMC, especially in synchronous e-chat, the English that the Korean participants encountered allowed them to scrutinize words and sentences by comparing them to those that they had learned in their English. This theme includes awkward English and real English, easy English, interesting English, and poetic English. It was like what they experienced when they appreciate art in galleries. The respondents stated that after they finished e-mails and e-chats, they read the dialogues more than once because they were stored on their computers. They concentrated on analyzing the expressions by asking themselves questions, paying special attention to details, exploring the meanings and the ways that words are combined, and scrutinizing the structure of the expressions.

Chapelle (2001) explained authenticity of language use as the degree of possibility that a second language learner is likely to encounter outside the context in which the language is being used. For example, authentic teaching or learning materials in English classes in EFL/ESL environments need to be culturally contextualized and may possibly be used in the countries where English is spoken natively.

A unique characteristic of CMC contributed to the process of Korean participants' understanding authentic English. In contrast to face-to-face interaction, CMC correspondents are able to retrieve the online dialogue anytime, which allows them to learn and review expressions that they had not understood at the time of the conversation. It also enables them to identify the context, where the conversation was going, and what words or expressions were not comprehensible. While revising the dialogues, the participants had enough time to reflect on the expressions. Thus, the degree of language learners' concentration on the language seems to have relied on the time given to the learners and on their intentional efforts. In CMC, correspondents can have access to the whole dialogue by scrolling back and forth or by printing it.

In looking at their online dialogues and interviewing the participants, I recognized that they were more interested in new expressions that they had not seen or in the native speakers' modified input when it was juxtaposed with the original ones than in those that were more easily understandable or formal.

Sometimes the Korean participants used English vocabulary or sentences that they based on literal translations from Korean into English. They often thought that Korean is more logical than English:

> I realized that I, all the time, speak English in such a way that I speak in Korean. It is because why our English was called '*Konglish*.' But sometimes I found *Konglish* was better than real English. It is more reasonable and logical; however, *Konglish* is awkward English. (interview with Jung, November 20)

For the Korean participants who rarely had opportunities to have one-to-one interactions with native English speakers, they encountered an abundance of new English terms during the CMC. The one-to-one interaction provided the participants in this study with options to select topics in which both parties were interested, which encouraged them to make their intended meanings as clear as possible. Language form is the device used to convey meanings. The Korean participants often tended to use literal translation, which was comprehensible to them but awkward to the native speakers.

The native speakers gave direct or indirect feedback on the deviant language forms that the native speakers used, and the nonnative speakers noticed the erroneous language forms, which allow them to consider and reconsider the deviance. During their e-chats, the native speaking parties either directly or indirectly often made an effort to

allow their Korean partners to notice errors, which drew the Korean participants' attention to them. In the interview with Sharon, a native speaker, she mentioned that she was afraid that she might hurt her partner's pride (November 29) by providing her with direct negative feedback. She was already aware that her partner was very sensitive. As Sharon provided her partner with corrective feedback indirectly, Jung clearly noticed what was unacceptable English.

In the online e-chat below, Jung and Sharon talked about Sharon's art class. At the time, Sharon had begun to learn to paint in a private art class:

> Jung: What do you paint now?
> Sharon: Start easy and go from there.
> Jung: The still things are more difficult than landscape.
> Sharon: Do you like Still life painting?
> Jung: Oh, yes, I like painting Still life. (November 19)

In an interview Jung stated that she concentrated on the expressions *still life* and *still things* after she had finished the e-chat. She thought that *still things* should be right rather than *still life*, because *painting still life* could not include objects such as desks, houses, or buildings (November 20); and she believed that these objects should be included in *things* rather than in *life*. Jung translated Korean words for still life into English literally. However, Sharon corrected the error that Jung had indirectly made, and Jung noticed the error and used real English correctly.

Although second-language learners often regard indirect feedback as effective, direct feedback can also be useful to some of them. Kim cited another example of her partner's direct feedback on an awkward English expression, which was caused by her literal translation of her thought into English:

> Kim: I can find out some crowds around my apartment.
> Tarry: I don't understand . . . find out some crowds . . . ?
> Kim: They want to keep their health and they do the jogging or walking at night, because they don't have much time in daytime.
> Kim: The percentage of people like them is increasing now.
> Tarry: Ah! I think that it would have been better to say, "I often see people walking (for their health) outside my apartment."
> Kim: Thank you. (e-chat, December 2)

Kim did not understand why Tarry considered her first phrase "some crowds around my apartment" incorrect or not acceptable, because she thought that the sentence was

grammatically correct. In an interview Kim stated that she regarded 'some people' to mean 'crowds' (December 6), but the meaning of 'crowds' was so different from 'some people' to her native-speaking partner (December 18). For Kim, 'people around my apartment' naturally represented 'walking outside my apartment.' Kim was curious about why 'walking' should precede 'around,' because she thought that everybody knew that people who were around her apartment in the morning or at night were walking. She had translated her Korean way of thinking into English. To Tarry, Kim's message was not clear enough for her to be able to interpret her intended meaning because it had insufficient information. Kim said in her interview that she scrutinized her sentence and compared it to her partner's sentence in order to discover why Tarry was confused. She said that it was the verb *walk* that showed a picture of her intended meaning clearly to Tarry.

Tarry corrected the error directly, but very politely. In the preceding dialogue, "I think that it would have been better to say . . ." touched her because she knew that her partner was very considerate and careful in giving her feedback. Even though the error was corrected directly, Kim was not unhappy at all (December 6).

E-mail was more useful than e-chats to the Korean participants because it allowed them more time to pay attention to real or authentic English. The following are excerpts of e-mails by Shon and Tomy:

> Oh, my gosh! The bottom of right mountain-climbing boot came off. I bound it with a cord. After moving several steps again, The whole of bottom slid off, so he could not walk more. (Shon, December 15)

Changing 'slid off' to 'falling off,' Tomy commented:

> I've never heard about a sole falling completely off a shoe. You said that you would have to repair the shoes. (December 15)

Recognizing that 'slid off' needed to be changed to 'falling off,' Shon wrote:

> Well, I still keep sole falling off shoes (two shoes). My husband had used them only once and made them washed at washing-shoes-shop. (December 20)

Shon said that she was very appreciative of Tomy's indirect way of correcting her awkward English (December 21). She found the expressions 'came off' and 'slid off' among many expressions when she consulted a dictionary, which took 10 minutes. There

was no way to check whether the expressions were correct or not, but she was sure that the expressions were at least grammatically correct. However, it was hard to find the proper word for 'sole' in the Korean-English dictionary. Having had time to compare her deviant form with that of real English through the exchange of e-mails with her partner, she could finally expand her English to say 'keep sole falling off shoes." In an interview Shon told me how the 'falling off shoe' incident had happened:

> I went to a nice family getaway, and it was all ruined by shoes problem (or two shoes). The expressions I wanted to use were not found in a dictionary, even in Internet dictionary. Considering the expression, I decided to choose several ones out of many other words, 'go off' or 'come off' 'slid off' and 'disappear.' Among them, 'come off' seemed to be the most proper. I could not find an English word for 'the bottom of shoes' either. I expected he would tell me about more proper expression for my awkward expressions in his response mail. He always did like the way. As I expected I had finally got it! In his response, I found very, very good expressions, which were 'sole' and 'fall off.' (December 21)

When asked how she would have felt if her partner had corrected her awkward English directly to change 'the whole bottom slid off or came off' to 'sole completely falling off,' Shon said that if that had been the case she would rather not have continued to correspond with him. It seemed to me that the method of correcting errors should be determined by individual characteristics. Even though she wanted to learn authentic English from him, she wished that her partner would consider her pride as an English teacher. Sharon felt that her partner was like a very good native-speaking friend and a very considerate language teacher. Tomy's feedback led Shon to think about the expressions that were used for 'slid off.' She found 'slid off' in her dictionary, but her partner used the phrase 'falling off.' Even though 'slid off' was grammatically correct, it was not used by most English speakers, and the expression was not authentic English. She thought that her partner's use of 'falling off' was indirect corrective feedback to indicate the authentic use of English.

In the three cases cited above the Korean participants were made aware of their errors when their partners corrected them indirectly or directly. They finally realized the gap between their erroneous expressions and those of their partners. At last they were able to use the model expressions provided by their partner. As Gass and Selinker (2001) noted, the language learner's realization of errors is essential for successful second-

language learning, rather than the native speaker's bringing the error to the learner's attention. Gass and Selinker gave an example in which the learner's realization of an error does not occur:

> NS: When I get to Paris, I'm going to sleep for one whole day. I'm so tired.
> NNS: What?
> NS: I'm going to sleep for one whole day.
> NNS: One hour a day?
> NS: Yes.
> NNS: Why?
> NS: Because I'm so tired. (p. 292)

Learning a language requires the learners' awareness of what part of conversation is problematic and breaks down the flow of communication. To learn authentic language, language learners need to pay attention to native speakers' use of language; this requires time and recognizing what makes communication break down. In the example above, the nonnative speaker understood the native speaker to say "one hour a day" rather than "one whole day." Their miscommunication originated in the fact that they were not aware of the error. Gass and Selinker stated that corrective feedback is necessary to gain the attention of adult learners of a second language. In the three cases of corrective feedback in this section, the participants not only compared their errors, but also had time to think about the correction after they finished their e-chats. Therefore the partner's corrections and the Korean participants' realization of their errors might help them to learn authentic expressions by comparing them to their '*Konglish*.'

Through the native speakers' corrective feedback, the nonnative speakers became aware of the deviant forms and language usage from the authentic English that the native speakers used. Even if corrective feedback or authentic input is provided to nonnative speakers, without focused attention they might not understand how awkward and authentic English have been used differently:

> We have to recognize that we Korean often tend to use difficult English. One reason of it is that we try to use so called sophisticated English although there should be an easy English to express in a simple way. (interview with Kim, November 15)

Kim believed that good English is English through which a speaker can convey what he/she means. She also tended to think that more sophisticated English is better English.

Whenever she e-mailed her partner, she wanted to use more sophisticated English, but it took her more time to find good expressions.

On Monday mornings Kim felt a little tired and said that she needed more time to relax; she thought that it would be better if she could have two Sundays a week. Her feeling was slightly different from just feeling tired, because the feeling included her unwillingness to work on this day. She felt depressed and discouraged for no specific reason. This was the day that she was supposed to e-mail to her partner, and she wanted to tell him how she felt, but the proper expression did not come to her. What was the English word representing this feeling? It wasn't 'feeling tired'; it might be 'depressed' or 'unhappy' that she sometimes felt, especially on Monday. When she wrote "I felt tired on Monday" in her e-mail, she was reminded of one very good English expression: 'blue Monday.' At the end of her e-mail she asked her partner if the expression "I felt blue Monday" was correct. Tarry's response was very clear, polite, and easy to understand:

> "Blue Monday" refers to the day, but "the Monday Blues" refers to the feelings. Actually, now that you mention it, . . . I DO "feel a little down" today. (November 11)

How simple and easy to understand! Kim expressed her surprise as "feel a little down," which is exactly the same in the Korean way of thinking (November 15), so Kim thought that the expression would be unfamiliar to a native English speaker. She usually adhered to the principle that adjectives that represent emotional states such as angry, tired, good, or sad should follow the word 'feel,' but another surprise to her was that 'down' could be used to relate to feelings. "Is 'down' an adjective?" Kim asked me in the interview. When she read the expression "feel a little down," it was exactly what she felt that she was trying to express. It was not the expression that her dictionary could have given her. It seemed that Kim's thinking about form-meaning mapping made her aware of the fact that there is a way to represent her ideas in English easily instead of using difficult or sophisticated expressions. It is all about how to express opinions authentically.

Kim also cited another example of an English expression that she had taken for granted:

> My partner is very knowledgeable at history, education, and linguistics, so I praised him that he knew so many jargons. His response was surprising to me. He explained about the difference between the word 'jargon' and 'technical

> terminology.' My partner said that the word 'jargon' was negative and 'technical terminology' is a positive way of jargon. My dictionary doesn't say like that; however, I decided to believe my partner's explanation. (interview, January 12)

When Kim asked me about the difference between 'jargon' and 'technical terminology' in the interview, I was not sure that I could answer. She stated that she had never heard the expression 'technical terminology.' When she read the words in her partner's response, she thought that 'technical terminology' looked like professional words for 'technician' rather than for use in the professional areas of education, history, philosophy, or literature. When she asked me about the words, I remembered that I had used the word 'jargon' several times when I took courses at the University of Alberta. However, nobody had alerted me to the subtle difference.

I suggested that she look up the difference between the two in a dictionary, but she found only a slight difference in usage. I believed that if 'jargon' has a negative connotation, the two should be easily distinguished. I needed to check the difference with Kim's partner, Tarry. He replied that 'jargon' can sometimes be used in a negative way (January 18) and that it is not usual for native speaker to say "You have a lot of jargon in your speech." This opportunity allowed Kim to view English and the English dictionary in a different way.

Jung provided me with an interesting example that gave her a good opportunity to think of the use of English. The following is an online dialogue between Jung and her partner, Sharon, in which they were talking about Sharon's plan to have a baby:

> Jung: Now do you think of having a baby after your wedding?
> Sharon: Sure but I think I want to be married for a year. I like just having the two of us.
> Sharon: We have freedom to do anything we want right now and that totally will change when we have children. (e-chat, February 2)

Jung said in an interview that her partner often gave her some 'weird' English that made her concentrate on understanding the meaning of phrases or sentences (February 8). Although she knew all words in the sentence ("I want to be married for a year"), the meaning of the sentence was confusing. Jung, of course, understood what her partner was saying; it meant, "I don't want to have a baby within a year. I plan to wait at least a year to have a baby." However, "Look at the structure of the sentence," Jung said. The

sentence was "I want to be married for a year," and that made Jung very confused. Even though she knew that her partner was already married, she was not clear why Sharon had said that she wanted to be married for a year at the same time. It sounded very 'weird' to Jung. She said that if she had read the sentence in the newspaper, she would have not been able to understand what it meant, but the context of their dialogue made her realize what the sentence meant. She could actually understand the sentence better after reading her partner's second turn, "We have freedom to do anything we want right now and that totally will change when we have children." Oh, she wanted to have freedom without having a baby for a year! So :I want to be married for a year" meant that she wanted to be married without a baby for at least for a year. Jung concentrated on the one sentence after finishing the dialogue, reading again and again each word and the structure of the sentence, with her head moving from right to left, from left to right.

What made Jung confused was the use of verbs *be* and *get*. Jung said in the interview that she thought that 'get married' and 'be married' had the same meanings. While rereading and considering Sharon's use of 'be married' in the sentence, she concluded that 'be married' referred to a state and 'get married' referred to a process. Thus, Jung began to understand that Sharon's expression "I want to be married for a year" meant "I want to be in the married state for a year before having a child." Her awareness of the proper usages of verbs required that she focus her attention on the words and analyze the context of the dialogues.

Kim also provided another example, on the necessity of using word combinations carefully. She and Tarry were talking about a person who was their friend:

> Tarry: He is one of my colleagues and he seems to be a good person.
> Kim: Yes. He is *in passion*.
> Tarry: He is *passionate* (about teaching)?
> Tarry: *In passion* would be a very strange way of stating it . . . in English.
> Kim: Why?
> Tarry: It might mean that he was very interested in . . . sex.
> Kim: Oh, my God!!!
> Tarry: You gave me a bit of a chuckle there. Thank you. (e-chat, December 3)

It was very funny, Kim said, because she vividly remembered that she had read the expression in a book. After finishing the dialogue, she used her dictionary again to confirm her interpretation as correct, except for a missing 'a' between 'in' and 'passion.'

The expression 'in a passion' means 'passionate,' according to the dictionary. "How can I trust my dictionary in terms of the actual use of English in current English-speaking societies? . . . Anyway, it was really embarrassed, frustrated, and fun!" (December 8).

Kim became aware that words and different combinations of words can create huge differences in meaning. One of the factors that made Kim concentrate on the expressions that she or her native-speaking partner used is the way that the words were combined. Although she was confused that the two expressions had quite different meanings and that her dictionary did not indicate the differences, the conversation and the opportunity to think further about the differences was valuable to her because she began to recognize how crucial it was to use prepositions properly in combination with other words. For Kim, the dialogue was very instructive (interview, December 8). Kim realized that native English speakers do not always use grammatically correct English.

## Fun

The Korean participants who had been anxious and frustrated in the early stages of their CMC correspondence began to relax and enjoy the e-chats and e-mails as the project progressed. In their interviews I recognized that several factors contributed to this comfortable feeling, such as their perceptions of the evolution of their relationships with their native-speaking partners from teacher-student to friend, the trust building, the feelings of empathy, and their desire to help each other. Shon described her feelings of comfort in the later stages as 'from sauna to coffee shop' (February 25). Earlier, she had stated that she did not have time to think about how fast the time was passing or to wipe sweat off her face. Later on, although there were still some difficulties, the Korean participants had the 'space in their minds' (time) to read their messages from their partners in a more enjoyable way, and this CMC interaction became fun when they began to overcome their difficulties.

### *Having Fun With Puns*

> I had expected that I would send my messages faster than before as time passed in our e-chats. However I did not, rather than I could not. I sometimes had a laugh at my partner's interesting expressions, enjoyed them, or had a time of leaning back to my chair for thinking of them. (interview with Kim, February 18)

For Kim it became very enjoyable to e-chat with her partner. She thought that it was like playing with words. Although her partner's responses enabled her to recognize her errors, the way that her partner chose to make her aware of them was very interesting. She laughed, and her partner laughed. After finishing the dialogue and rereading it, she laughed again. She was having fun with puns.

> Kim: But I wonder some of my students may give up to study English and hate it in the class.
> Tarry: That is their choice. We must respect their choices . . . even if we don't agree.
> Kim: I have to push my lazy students to study hard! Anyway, My classroom is still cold. So I turned on the electronic *hitter*.
> Tarry: *Hitter*! Hahaahaha.
> Kim: ?
> Tarry: *Heater*, I think! But I was picturing an electric '*hitter*' for the bad students! Hahahahaha.
> Tarry: It made me laugh! Thank you!
> Tarry: Of course, there was *Hitler* . . .
> Kim: *Hitler*?
> Tarry: He was probably a '*hitter*'; he certainly wasn't very nice.
> Tarry: I am having fun with words.
> Tarry: Do you know the word, 'pun'?
> Kim: pun? No.
> Tarry: Noun: pun
> 1. A humorous play on words.
> 2. Make a play on words.
> Tarry: It is when we make a joke that is based on misunderstandings of words, because of similar sounds.
> Kim: So we are having *fun with pun*. It is really fun! (e-chat, January 15)

Kim told me that she had told this funny story to her husband, her colleagues, her friends, and whomever she met (January 27). She started by asking, "Have you heard of an English word *pun*?" She was impressed by her partner's knowledge of English and the ability to link a word to another word. She said that she never expected that she would have fun playing on English words during the conversation with a native English speaker. While e-chatting with her partner, she recognized that English was fun and that playing on words was interesting.

Kim initiated the following discussion with the purpose of playing on words, which she had found on the Internet:

Kim: There are so many kinds of groups in the world.
Tarry: 6,000,000,000 people! Too many!
Kim: What we call, DINK, BOBOS, etc.
Tarry: What? What were those strange words?
Kim: But I think I belong to "DUKE'
Tarry: What? I am lost? I don't understand.
Kim: It indicates some groups to call New Generation
Tarry: Really? Hmm. These words are new to me. Well, 'dink' means penis. Duke is a kind of royalty. . .
Kim: For an example, DIWK means the people 'Double Income With Kids.' But DINK means "Double Income No Kids.
Tarry: Ahhh! Now, I understand.
Kim: I read it in Internet news this morning. (e-chat, January 20)

While Kim was reading newspapers and on the Internet, she was subconsciously searching for possible topics for her next e-chat or e-mail. She did not intentionally search the Internet for the sake of finding words for punning. When she read the words 'DUKE' and 'DINK' on the Internet, she was happy that she had found something that she could discuss with him. Thus, to some extent all of the reading that she did seemed to be a good source for their e-chats. She did not expect that e-chatting with her partner would encompass many aspects of her everyday life, and she remembered how anxious and worried she had been about her e-chats with her native-speaking partner in the early stages when her concerns were what to say, how to say what she wanted to say, what to do if she could not understand her partner, or what her partner might think of her because of her poor English. Looking back at that initial stage, she said that she did not expect to have this kind of fun (January 27).

***Poetic English***

> Cozy means . . . 'comfortable and happy,' and 'fluttering' is used for describing the snow. One almost has the idea of thousands of tiny white butterflies surrounding one as one skis. (interview with Jung, January 24)

During an informal group meeting with the Korean participants, Jung suddenly asked me, "Do you know *cozy*?" (January 24). I had never heard of the word before. She explained that it meant 'comfortable and happy.' Jung liked the word very much when she read her partner's e-mail. She described it feeling as though she was touching the very smooth hair of a cat, but she did not know what made her feel like that. While

listening to Jung, Kim wrote the word in her notebook. After scrutinizing each letter of 'cozy,' she laughed and said that it was an artificial word, not a real English word. She explained that the first two letters of 'cozy,' C-O, and the last letter of 'happy,' Y, had been put together to artificially create 'cozy.' They looked up the word in an English-Korean dictionary and found that it is a real English word. Jung told the participants and me her story about her reuse of the word in her e-mail to her partner:

> When I stayed in a hotel with my family during holiday, the word 'cozy' suddenly appeared in my mind. Having come back home, I had a chance to use it in my mail to my partner: "After dinner, we went to the lobby lounge of Beach Paradise Hotel to have some coffee. There was a cozy place to e-chat and enjoy sweet coffee." (informal group interview, January 15)

It seems that the word 'cozy' popped into her mind when she found a comfortable place, and it remained with her. Her aesthetic sense and appreciation of the word when she focused on it made her want to remember it. The role of consciousness with intentional attention seems to be very much related to the learning process for language learners.

Jung gave a similar example. The word she liked most was 'fluttering.' She said that she began to enjoy her e-mail exchanges with her partner not only because of her expectation of improving her English, but also because of the beautiful words that her partner used. How soft and gentle the meaning is, Jung explained (January 15). Actually, her partner had used the expression "thousands of tiny white butterflies surrounding one as one skis" in an e-mail, and Jung remembered the expression in the interview. She seemed to have a kind of aesthetic or poetic feeling about it and remembered this feeling. She anticipated using the expression or being reminded of it in certain situations. These feelings, combined with focusing on a particular expression, seem to facilitate language learning and help language learners to remember words longer than being in situations that call the words to mind. They may also provide learners with opportunities or the desire to reuse the words.

Overall, the participants' perceptions of 'easy English, 'difficult English,' and 'fun English' provided them with opportunities to think about authentic English use and to scrutinize the combination of words in an expression. These opportunities seemed to encourage the participants to concentrate on the words and led to explicit language learning.

**Willingness to Communicate**

The Korean participants' 'willingness to communicate' with their native-speaking partners resulted from their strong motivation and the strong support of their partners. One of the factors that encouraged them to communicate was the role of CMC as a stimulator, as well as the direct support of their partners. Being stimulated, the Korean participants gained self-confidence and the motivation to continue to correspond with their partners. They also kept searching for topics for their e-chats through reading English expressions on the Internet and in books, magazines, and advertisements around them in their everyday lives. With strong support from their native-speaking partners, the Korean participants began to take a risk in actively engaging in conversations without hesitation in their e-chats by asking whatever they wanted to know, with little fear of making errors.

*Willingness to communicate* is defined as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using second language" (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clëment, & Noels, 1998, p. 547). The factors that influenced the Korean participants' desire and willingness to communicate include their motivation, their recognition of the native speakers' motivation, and the strong support of their partners. This motivation was also encouraged by the Korean participants' perceptions of their native-speaking partners' motivation to join in the research. The instant help that they received through the Internet e-chat program was very beneficial to the Korean participants in doing their work in the classroom as well as in school works. It should be noted here that one of the important factors that influenced the learners' willingness to communicate was their perceived communicative competence. It is highly likely that all of the participants were confident enough that their English proficiency was at least good enough to communicate with their partners. As Shon stated in an interview:

> I don't know how much improvement of English proficiency I have achieved. I had some problems to deliver what I meant to him. But in the case, I paraphrased the sentences into easier English in order to make it clear. . . . Now, I have confidence in communicating with my partner. No problem! (October 20)

In the interview Shon clearly felt that her English proficiency had improved. When asked how she recognized the improvement, she said that it was through comparing her current

English proficiency with that in the early stages of the study: (a) It did not take as long to read and comprehend her partner's messages, (b) she did not feel burdened to write a message, (c) she began to learn how to ask what she wanted know, and (d) her anxiety in speaking only in English in her classroom had been greatly reduced. Then she asked me, "How can I measure the improvement of my English proficiency?" Her perception of her improvement seems to have contributed to her willingness to communicate with her native-speaking partner.

***Motivation of Nonnative Speakers***

> When I passed by McDonald shop, I saw '*i am loving it*' on the signboard. That is it! I got it! I will talk about it with Tarry this coming e-chat time. (interview with Kim, January 7)

One day while Kim was walking along the street near a big department store that she sometimes visited, a signboard drew her attention. When she read the English on the signboard on the wall of McDonald's, she thought that the English looked strange—not because the subject of the sentence was a small *i*, but because she thought that the main verb, 'loving,' and the auxiliary verb, 'am,' should read, 'I love it.' Because of her lack of knowledge of English grammar, she did not understand that state-of-being verbs are used with the progressive form, '-ing.' In the following example Kim discussed her curiosity about the sentence:

> Kim: Did you read the slogan in the street to add McDonald. "i'm loving it"
> Kim: Have you read it?
> Tarry: I haven't seen it, no.
> Tarry: Of course, it should be: "I'm loving it!"
> Kim: Really? I think the verb 'love' says the state. It doesn't explain the behavior.
> Tarry: Hmmm.
> Kim: I can't tell you my intention well.
> Tarry: Well, 'love' can be active and passive.
> Tarry: I know it is a difficult idea. It is difficult to express.
> Kim: What's the difference between ' I love you and I'm loving it'?
> Tarry: And remember, idiom is not always logical. In fact, it is almost always very difficult to explain . . . idiom. Well . . . they are very similar. There is a bigger difference between being 'in love' and 'loving' someone or thing, or action, or idea.
> Kim: Thank you! (e-chat, January 3)

Although they did arrive at the answer that Kim was seeking, she was satisfied with the conversation with Tarry on a topic that she wanted to discuss. It is highly likely that she was driven by several factors. *Drive* has been understood as *motivation*, one of the crucial nonlanguage factors in second-language learning (Gass & Selinker, 2001). Although various definitions of motivation have been compared and the definitions are significantly different, as Gass and Selinker pointed out, motivation has been regarded as "an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves one to a particular action (Brown, 1994, p. 152).

How surprised Kim was that even though she had often walked along the street where McDonald's was located, she had never noticed that this sentence looked strange. In the interview she said that it was a recent phenomenon that whenever she encountered English, she considered it as a possible topic for her next e-chat with her partner (January 7). She guessed that her usual practice of reading her online dialogue and thinking about the English expressions that her partner used might have made her scrutinize the words and the structure of sentences. She seemed to be subconsciously, gradually motivated to continue to correspond with her native-speaking partner in English. Kim stated in the interview that the driving force for her strong interest in English expressions seemed to come from several sources, such as her desire to keep communicating with her partner, her perceived improvement in her English proficiency, her positive attitude toward English, and her gradual increased empathy to her partner. Her increased empathy toward Tarry was likely based on the trust, strong support, and encouragement that she received from him.

Motivation can be increased according to the "language learner's need and his or her attitude toward the second language community" (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 56). However, Kim's attitude toward the English community rarely changed from being positive, but in her interview she stated that her attitude toward her partner had also become very positive and had increased her motivation to communicate with him, which is a situation-specific motivation.

In response to my question, "Would you tell me any change you have noticed while participating in this project?" Jung reported her changes in attitude:

> I haven't passed by English-related scripture, letters, newspapers, movies, and even expressions in English textbooks. It is, I am sure, because of the influence by the e-mails and e-e-chats with my partner. Furthermore, I bought a novel, *Harry Potter*, and have read it once. It was not easy to comprehend, but I am planning to read it again. (September 20)

Jung bought the novel *Harry Potter* after her Monday e-chat with her partner, in which Tarry had talked about the importance of reading for English learners, and she noticed that he was very knowledgeable about linguistics, literature, and especially novels. In the interview Jung said that though she realized the usefulness of reading English books, she had not read any English novels yet. She was sure that if she had not had opportunities to e-mail and e-chat, she would never have tried to read English novels such as *Harry Potter*. She believed that she had been motivated to buy the novel not only to improve her English proficiency, but also because it might be a topic that could contribute to the natural flow of her conversations with her partner. From her experience with this CMC conversation, she felt that content knowledge on a particular topic was valuable to keep their communication active. It was also a factor that made her partner feel motivated to participate in conversations. Her motivation was therefore very closely linked with that of her partner.

Jung's motivation became stronger as time passed, as the following e-mail that she sent to her partner shows:

> I really want to have more fluent e-chat with you in English so I decided to find a way to improve my English. I'm thinking that I should learn English more during this coming vacation. Few days ago, I had an interview with a Canadian teacher to take an English conversation class at a Hakwon [language academy]. After the interview, he [examiner] wrote down 'Advanced' for my class on my ticket. I was pleased with that. At the same time I was worried about my poor English. As time goes on, I expect, my English will be improved. (December 11)

Jung told me, jokingly, that she was not sure which possibility was more likely: that her purpose in registering in the language academy was to facilitate good conversation with her partner, or whether her purpose in e-chatting with her partner was to improve her English. She sometimes felt confused about her real purpose, but she said that her reason for registering in the language academy was mainly the former: to foster better conversations with her partner. She said in the interview, "It seemed to be a bit absurd, isn't it?" and she laughed.

***Support From Native Speakers of English***

One of the main benefits for the Korean participants was the opportunity for strong support from their native speaking partners, whereas in an EFL environment there are rare opportunities to ask and answer directly through one-to-one and instant contact with native-speaking helpers. The native-speaking partners' support was a real, clear, and practical benefit for them. It should be noted that, primarily in the early stages of the study, the Korean participants hesitated to contact their partners instantly. Later, after building trust in the relationship and becomes familiar with each other, the Korean participants did not hesitate to request instant help. To do that, from the beginning they needed to know their native-speaking partners' motivation to participate in the research; this was a big concern to them. They sometimes asked me whether I had paid the native English speaking participants money to teach English to the Korean participants. They were very skeptical about the motivation of the native English speaking participants to correspond with them. Vygotsky (1978) explained that two elements are required to reach the level of desired learning with assistance: advanced peers or adults and active participation of the learner in ZPD. The learners (the participants in my study) needed to know the motivation of the advanced peers (the native English speakers in my study), without which the learners' continuous active participation might not have been possible.

***Motivation of native speakers.***

> I like e-chatting with my partner partly because she is smart, intelligent, and nice person I like to talk to. It is nice to talk to well-educated Korean teacher. It is very natural conversation. I was surprised because I thought I would be talking for a study, but I am not. I just enjoyed e-chatting itself. It is my social activities and it gives me a pleasure. (interview with Tarry, November 12th)

When I asked Tarry whether he could find other Korean people with whom he was able to talk and socialize, he replied that, first, there were few people whom he could trust; second, there were few people whose English was fluent enough to enjoy e-chatting; third, there were few people who were able to understand him as a foreigner; and fourth, there were few people who were open-minded and easy enough to talk to.

Tarry stated that trust was not built at the first stage of the research and that he had thought that his Korean partner might be the same as other Korean people whose purpose in approaching him was only to learn English. However, as time passed they

became closer. He recognized that his partner had fewer problems in communicating in English than others whom he usually met in Korea, and he told me that he needed to talk to Korean people because he wanted to know Korean culture. When asked what the culture is, Tarry's answer was quite clear: The culture is all things that "normal" Korean people take for granted. He gave examples of what the culture was for him: Culture might include not only the historical sites, the educational system, or the way of dealing with students in classroom, but also how Korean people think, behave, and view differently from them. He stated that his partner had helped him to understand Korea, even though, as he had said in the interview, he had not expected to learn a great many things about Korea and Korean people in the beginning stages of the study.

Tarry told me in an interview that he was surprised that the e-chatting and e-mailing exchange with his partner gave him pleasure. He noticed his partner's improvement in English, and this pleased him and made him want to help her even more.

> The fact that I can help the person who needs me also gives me a pleasure. In the meantime, her limited conversation will be getting better, I am sure. If she wants to, I would like to e-chat with her more frequently. Two times per a week is not good enough for her to improve her English and I like e-chats with her. If she wants to e-chat every night or every second night, it will be fine to me. . . . I don't know why she doesn't try to e-chat more often. I guess e-chat is stressful to her, but I know she knows that more often e-chat is useful to her. If she e-chats more frequently, she has got used to it. I am happy that I can help them. (November 12)

In talking with Tarry, I found it surprising that he was ready to e-chat with his partner, Jung, almost all the time if she wanted to. I wondered whether he noticed that his partner's English was improving, and when I asked how he recognized it, he answered that he was able to better understand her English. He was also surprised that he had not expected to say that he liked e-chats. He already knew about Korean English teachers and what the EFL situation was. Tarry's motivation to help Jung drove him to encourage Jung all the time. The following is an example of the e-mail that he sent to Jung:

> Please don't be sorry that you letter is long! It is a great pleasure for me to get your letters! I am a person who hates to write letters and has no friends because I don't like people, but . . . LOOK AT ME!!! I am writing long letters back to you! I don't understand!! You must be giving me something that I need. Thank you! (November 4)

Kim, Tarry's later partner, gained confidence from his continuous encouragement. It seemed to me that Tarry had taken a kind and supportive teacher's role. Kim had almost memorized Tarry's positive comments: "Please! Do not worry about mistakes in grammar in our e-chatting. I will understand! It is only by practice that we get better" (November 20). When I asked her how she felt about his encouragement, she answered that she considered him a very kind private tutor. "He always encourages me to ask any questions because it makes the conversation more interesting. He also asked me to ask him any word he had used; then he would put the words into simpler terms or words" (November 20).

Tomy, Shon's partner, also very positive about their exchange of e-chats and e-mails. The following is an e-mail that Tomy sent to Shon:

> Well, we need to arrange a time for e-chatting this week. I want to e-chat with you more, and I will try my best from now on. When can you e-chat this week? Let's try to e-chat twice this week, even if we have to e-chat from home one night. That is ok with me. (December 4)

Tomy regarded his Korean partner, Shon, as a real friend. He had a special memory about his partner's help. He had had a couple of housing problems that should have been solved at the time. Water was leaking through the wall of his new apartment, and he had asked the landlord to fix it but had been refused many times. While he and his wife were trying to solve the problem in various ways, her partner went to her friend, a lawyer. Her friend gave them some advice about an effective way to solve the problem. They were to go to a particular government office and file a complaint with the person in charge of handling housing problems. The problem was solved! "I really appreciate her efforts to help me. I know that if I have other problems here, I can ask her for advice. I have a Korean friend I can trust!" (interview with Tomy, November 12).

For Tomy, his partner was not a person who wanted only to learn English any more, as he had assumed in the first stage of the research; she became a helper to him, and vice versa.

***Instant helper and tutor.*** In an e-chat, Kim wrote to Tarry, "Help! Help! If you get this message, please let me know as soon as possible. I don't have much time. Fortunately, I can see you are on-line!" (Kim, December 7).

Kim was a full-time English teacher and in charge of English education at her school, although her job was not limited to teaching English. Her colleagues often asked her to translate Korean into English and English into Korean or to write a letter of recommendation when their children wanted to study abroad. As well, students often asked her to write stories about their daily life experiences for an English-speaking competition. She could deal with some of these task easily; however, she found some very difficult.

One day in December the principal of Kim's school asked her to name each classroom in English, such as the principal' office, teacher's lounge, or resource room. Trusting in her English proficiency, the principal wanted it by the next day. However, she sensed that it was beyond her proficiency. But she was an English teacher, and the English title would be hung on the front door of each room. No mistranslation would be acceptable because the students, parents, or educational officers would see and learn the English titles on the nameplates. She had never visited elementary schools in the countries where English was used as a primary language, and she searched the homepages of foreign schools on the Internet, with unsatisfactory results. Kim had joined this study one month earlier, and she decided to ask for instant help from her partner. It took two hours for her to receive her partner Tarry's response with thoughtful explanations:

> Teachers' Room (capitals and the apostrophe after the 's' . . . plural possessive) Principal's Office or Office of the Principal, Administration Office or, simply Office, Science room or, simply Science (many schools do not bother with 'Room'), Music Room , or, simply Music, Home Economics Room or, simply Home Economics or Home Ec. Gymnasium or Physical Education or Phys. Ed. Library, Teachers' Workroom, Locker Room or Change Room, Broadcasting Room , Media Room, Announcements Room, Announcements, Cafeteria, Special Class.
> Kim, I hope that this gets to you on time and it will be helpful for you. I will try to be more helpful. (e-mail and e-chat, December 7)

The principal exclaimed, "You are really great! Thank you so much!" Kim was quite confident that all of the titles on the nameplates were the same as those in Canada, Tarry's country. In the interview Kim reported that if she had done the work without her partner's help, she would have been self-conscious whenever students or people looked at the nameplates (December 10), and it would have been so stressful!

Jung also told a similar story about her partner Tarry's help with her classroom work. She wanted to make a collection of students' Korean and English writing. She realized that the English title required good English because it was going to be read by the students, other teachers, the principals, the teachers of other schools, and the students' parents. She did not hesitate to ask her partner to help her and received his response the next day with the English title "A Classroom Full of Laughter." If the title had been written in awkward English, people might have laughed at her and her students as well as her school. She was very appreciative of his help.

Shon also cited a similar example of her partner's support, which involved English translation relating to her daily life:

> Shon: Good morning, Tomy. May I ask you a question?
> Tomy: Hello Shon. What's your question?
> Shon: 'Welcome to hometown' is a *Konglish*?
> Tomy: Sounds like *Konglish* to me. What is the context? Is that something you heard? Under what circumstances would you say that?
> Shon: I am going to make a placard for my husband's brother.
> Shon: He lives in L.A.
> Tomy: Your husband's brother doesn't live in Pusan, but is from here?
> Tomy: You should say, " Welcome Home."
> Shon: Thank you. I am looking for a more familiar expression for him and his family.
> Tomy: or "Welcome Back" (e-chat, January 9)

"Welcome home" or "welcome back" might be so simple to a native English speaker, but "welcome to hometown" is not grammatically incorrect and looked natural to her. It was an issue of the pragmatic use of English in which grammar is not incorrect but rarely used by native-speaking people in daily life. It is called *Konglish* or 'awkward English' or 'English-like English' in Korea. "Welcome to hometown" might be used even in her partner's country; however, it would depend on the context. Shon's very simple example gave her the opportunity to think of the proper contextual use of English.

Besides her daily life experiences, Tomy's help enabled Shon to apply her understandings to the classroom. 'Classroom English' refers to English expressions that are frequently used in classrooms. An 'English only policy' has been strongly recommended in English classes, but it is often beyond the proficiency level of English teachers in Korea. Therefore, 'classroom English' is used to enable the teachers to use it

as much as possible, as in, for example, "Open your book to page thirteen," "Close your eyes," or "Let's play a game." The Korean English teachers often had difficulties with instructions in how to play games in English. The following example may be very simple English to native English speakers, but it is not to nonnative speakers using classroom English:

> Shon: Oh, I have a question about the name of a game. Do you know 'Rock, scissors, paper'? I am not sure which is correct expression, 'rock, paper, scissors' or 'rock, scissors, paper'? I saw both in textbooks. And which verb is appropriate when explain how to play 'rock, scissors, paper'?
> Tomy: I think it's "rock, scissors, paper." I think we would just use the verb "do." For example: Let's do rock, scissors, paper to see who goes first. Does that answer your question?
> Shon: Thanks a lot, Tomy. You are a very excellent helper. It was so useful because I have a plan on class activities with the game next English class. (e-chat, September 25)

In the interview Shon said that the expression 'to see who goes first' was more helpful than what she had asked (October 3). When asked how she would have said it without her partner's help, she suggested that it might be "Let's play 'Rock, scissors, paper game' and who will win?" It was also grammatically not problematic, but she felt that 'to see who goes first' was quite natural.

The Korean English teachers encountered various difficulties in English classrooms. Even if they were educated to use English in a culturally appropriate way, it was not easy to choose a simple word for greeting other than 'Hi' and 'Hello.' Kim had heard two different statements on how teachers should be addressed by students. The first is that 'Hi' can be used with seniors, juniors, or even teachers; the second is that the two should be distinguished. In an e-mail Kim asked Tarry, "If I say to you, 'Hi.' Would you be offended? What's the difference in using 'hi' and 'hello'?" (December 16). Tarry responded:

> 'Hi' and 'Hello.' Well, 'Hi' is like '*Anyong*' and 'Hello' is like *'Anyong haseo'* in Korean. 'Hello' is more formal. I only say 'Hello' to someone who is very much my junior. I would never say it to another teacher or even one of my students. My students are adults, and 'Hi' would be too informal. 'Hi' is used only for very close friends. It is used even less than '*Anyong.*' However, about 'Hi,' don't be silly! I know that the foreigners teach such bad manners here. I never get angry, or insulted by that. I just try to help people use more respectful terms. Please

> teach your students the difference between the two, . . . please. (e-mail, December 19)

The issue of how to address someone in English was often controversial among the Korean English teachers. For example, they recognized that students in English-speaking countries are able to address their teachers by their first names. Kim also had allowed her students to use her first name. It was, according to my observation of elementary school in Canada, actually not natural in real situations. My Canadian friends who used to be teachers in elementary schools in Canada reported that students are strongly advised to use their teacher's last name with Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms. Through the e-mail dialogues, Kim began to understand the difference between 'hi' and 'hello' and was able to explain it to her students. From the next day on, her students would address her as 'Mrs. Kim.'

To all of the Korean participants, the practical and direct help that they sought was related to 'classroom English.' They were really interested in how to use comprehensible English to the level of their students in a natural way. As Jung was sure, Korean English teachers must sometimes be embarrassed when their students ask them how to say something in English. Jung also had a similar experience. She was asked how to say "Put on the clothes warmly: in English when it is cold outside. She answered, "Put on your clothes well." She was not sure whether the expression was good English or not. In the evening she e-mailed her partner, who responded two days later: The answer was "Dress warmly." It was only two words! It was also an example of how to use English in a simple and natural way. At the time Jung realized that selecting proper vocabulary might be more important than proper grammatical structure. She remember the simple two-word expression when she took a trip with her family. It was a very cold day outside when they arrived at a hotel, and in her e-mail to her partner she wrote, "It was freezing outside. I knew it. I was dressed warmly" (January 8).

However, Jung soon recognized that using simple and natural English might be more difficult than English-like English that was grammatically correct. She sent the following e-mail message to her partner on the same day that she mentioned using "I was dressed warmly."

> I had put on gloves! But I've never had gloves since my youth. When I was young I liked to knit wool into mittens, pull-overs and jackets. I made two pairs of

> mittens. I often took off my mittens because I felt stuffy, so I kept them in my hands or in my bag. (January 8)

Before she clicked the 'Send' key, she read her message again and again to see whether her words or sentences were natural. No matter how hard she tried to think of a good English word for 'stuffy' and to improve the other sentences, she could not find a simple and natural way of expressing them. She thought that it was best to have continuous contact with her keypal so that she could learn better how to use natural English.

***Coffee shop chats.***

> It was like talking with my close friend in a bar or coffee shop. We just enjoyed chats itself, without any burden to follow my partner. It was huge different from the chats in my early stage. I was chuckling, smiling, and laughing during the chat. (interview with Shon, February 3)

As the relationship between the Korean and native-speaking partners became easier, Shon and Tomy felt as though they were enjoying an informal chat with their friends or joking together in a coffee shop. The climate of the conversation was very warm and made them feel comfortable in chatting, and they felt little anxiety. It is also likely that their confidence, the strategies that they used to overcome anxiety, and many other positive factors made them feel relaxed.

> Tomy: San Diego—Sun, surf, beer, and bikinis (I'm a married man, but I still have eyes, you know). It will be great!
> Shon: ha, ha, Yes, you have eyes. I will enjoy to spend my time at the beach in summer.
> Shon: spending
> Tomy: Not many bikinis at the beaches in Korea, though. I even see people swimming with their clothes on here. Actually, I don't need to see bikinis to have a good time. Don't get the wrong idea. (e-chat, January 23)

Shon believed that it was not the light topic that made her comfortable, but rather the climate of the conversation (February 3), and she felt that unless her partner trusted her, the conversation would not have gone so smoothly. She stated she had experienced difficulties in the early stages, when she had always been very careful of saying anything that could offend Tomy because of the words or topics that she chose. She had been very sensitive to her partner's view all the time and was always concerned about how she might have looked better to him because of her use of a certain word, how he would feel when she said something, or how to use her most polite manner with him. Although it

was not clear who had broken the barriers first, Shon and Tomy both felt that they did not have to spend much time on those kinds of concerns any more in the later stages of the research. Shon was able to just enjoy the chats and not have to worry about studying English.

Kim provided a similar example. She and Tarry talked about me, the researcher, during their chats. Although they knew that I would read their online dialogue, they did not seem to be nervous about it, as seen in the following dialogue:

> Tarry: I met Lee yesterday. He believes in 'Me-ism.'
> Kim: Me-ism?
> Tarry: Me . . . ism.
> Tarry: That means . . . he believes in himself! I think that he is a very good Buddhist. . . in truth.
> Tarry: It means that he did not believe in God, he believed in himself!
> Tarry: he was just joking . . . pretending . . . I think he wanted to see what I would say.
> Kim: Hahaha. I think he is very humorous and smart.
> Tarry: Me, too.
> Tarry: We have to say this because someday he will be reading all of this!
> Kim: You are genius.
> Tarry: His wife is wonderful, too. I have to say that, too, because she might read this, too.
> Kim: That's right!!!
> Tarry: Yes. She is very beautiful! But a little too thin. She needs to put on a little weight.
> Kim: I know her too. a little.
> Tarry: She seems to be very intelligent, too. And her English is wonderful, too.
> Kim: Yes, I have to say this that she is a very good supporter for him.
> Tarry: We are doing very well!!!!! (e-chat, December 20)

Kim reported that she was comfortable during the chat. She told me that her conversation had been just as relaxed when she had met with her friend and talked about another friend (December 22). This causal and intimate conversation normally occur between people who know each other very well and are familiar with each other. They should not involve stressful situations or problems that must be solved. The Korean participants' initial purpose for learning English from their native English speaking participants no longer existed, nor did their efforts to maintain their honor as English teachers. They could escape a context in which formality and politeness dominated and move to the coffee shop, where they could lean back in an armchair while they drank coffee.

In the early stages the Korean participants could not recognize to whom they were talking, and in forming relationships, such factors as age or gender were crucial. Because the level of formality or politeness varies with the kind of relationship that they have with others, they were confused about what kinds of words they should use. Thus, early in the study one of the Korean participants had spent time deciding which greeting is more proper, 'hi' or 'hello.' However, later her faceless partner in cyberspace became one of her close friends.

As Kim reported in the interview about her hesitation in oral conversations with native English speakers in the language academy, formality and politeness were barriers for her (December 22). While she tried to think of the proper English word to use, sometimes the opportunity passed by. For example, she wondered whether there was a subtle nuance between "Would you tell me please . . . ?" and "Could you tell me please . . . ?" To speak perfectly, she had to choose one of them, which forced her to spend more time on the dilemma. She explained that the words were on the tip of her tongue—again and again! She felt that if the native speaker had been a 'real' friend, she never would have hesitated. As an English learner who had little knowledge of English words, phrases, and sentence structure, it was a huge burden to Kim to be able to use socially appropriate and polite English; and she believed that in a more comfortable climate she could have solved these concerns—a climate that enabled her to say what she wanted to say and to listen comfortably to what her partner said.

Overall, creating a climate for communication that was comfortable enough to enjoy chats was a factor that raised the motivation of the participants and kept them corresponding with each other. This motivation was also a facilitator in leading them to enjoy their chats.

### Intercultural Understanding

One of the main themes in relation to the benefits for the Korean participants was intercultural understanding. It would be unrealistic to separate second-language learning from the culture of the target language, because culture is embedded in the language. As Brown (1994) pointed out, learning a second language is learning the culture, because "language is a part of culture and culture is a part of language" (p. 165). I have not attempted to provide a complete definition of *culture* in this section, but I believe that it is

helpful to facilitate an understanding of the concept of culture. Scollon and Scollon (2001) suggested that culture is considered "any aspect of the ideas, communications, or behaviors of a group of people which gives to them a distinctive identity and which is used to organize their internal sense of cohesion and membership" (p. 140). Brown emphasized the context by saying "culture might be defined as the ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterize a given group of people in a given period of time" (p. 164). Brown also stressed that culture is not regarded as the sum of each part, but rather is understood as the behaviors, beliefs, values, ways of communications, customs, and historical heritage of a given group of people, which are characterized as the distinctive features of the people. In this study culture refers to concepts that include the connotations of words, lifestyles, worldviews, beliefs, values, educational or political systems, and customs of a group of people.

The values or attitudes of a group of people are not only embedded in the language that they use, but also expressed by the language. People often understand others or other cultures through communication using language, which contains different references. It is understood that words or phrases that people use have different connotations or images and that some expressions might be regarded as taboo. Language is embedded in people's thoughts, which are also embedded in their culture. As Sercu (1998) noted, a person's idea of *work* might be different from someone else's. The word might produce different images, such as *tolerance*, *laziness*, *freedom*, or *greed*, depending on the culture. To people who live in a Christian culture, the word *Sunday* might represent 'a day to go to church'; however, to an atheist worker it might be 'a day to take a rest.' Whereas the people of one group might be eager to discuss political issues or family issues, they might be sensitive topics to the people of another group. For second language learners it may be beneficial to maintain continuous contact with members of the target-language speaking countries through communication.

The Korean participants in this study not only began to understand some things about the culture of their partners' home countries, but also had opportunities to see their own culture from their partners' critical points of view. The topics they discussed varied greatly not only about political, social, educational, personal, and philosophical issues, but also about cultural issues such as the ways of celebrating holidays, foods, worldviews,

and cultural references to language. When expressions are interpreted or perceived differently by people of other groups, misunderstandings result, which impedes smooth communication.

***Pragmatic Use of English***

> When you say "I have no reason to go on living," and if I give you a comment with saying "No kidding," how would you feel? (interview with Jung, October 29)

For Jung it was an unexpected experience when she was told the meaning of "No kidding." Her understanding of the expression changed twice. The first time, she said, "It is so cold outside today" while e-chatting with her partner. It was an afternoon on which she chatted with her partner at her school when he was at his school. The day was very cold and windy, and his answer was "No kidding." Jung thought that this meant that Tarry had very good heating in his school, because she interpreted the words as "Are you joking? It is not cold." She asked him again whether it was not cold outside. His answer was "Yes, it is so cold outside." She was curious about the expression, but she moved to another topic.

As time passed and she had an opportunity to ask her partner again about the meaning of "No kidding," Jung asked why Tarry had given that answer. He explained that "No kidding" meant that he completely agreed with her and that she did not have to say that. In the interview Jung said, "That is a language. So complex, isn't it?" (October 29). In Korea "No kidding" is understood as "That is totally not" or "That could not happen ever" or "That should be a lie." It helped her to understand the practical use of English.

When Kim asked her partner about how to use "No kidding," Tarry replied:

> Tarry: No kidding! It is a polite and almost humorous way of saying, "You're telling the truth, right? Really?"
> Jung: the same expression
> Tarry: absolutely, or that is absolutely right!
> Tarry: 'No kidding' is not used for truly serious situations. It could be used as an answer to "No kidding." (e-chat, October 15$^{h}$)

After she began to understand how the expression is used, Jung was surprised, embarrassed, and frustrated. Before she knew the appropriate way to use "No kidding," Jung sometimes used it in a serious situation, such as the following:

> Tarry: I have no reason to go on living. None at all.
> Jung: No kidding! (e-chat, September 16)

In the interview Jung stated that she felt very sorry for her partner (October 29). Tarry was in a stressful situation because of his job security, loneliness, sadness, and physical sickness, and she felt that he might seek comfort from his partner. Her real intention was "Hey, that is no joking matter!" She was so worried that her intention might be interpreted as "Absolutely right!"

Kim cited another example of an interesting English expression that her partner, Tarry, had used that she have never heard of and which she could not find in her English dictionary:

> Tarry: And now, I think, it is 'pumpkin time.'
> Kim: To call it a day?
> Tarry: Exactly!
> Kim: Thanks. (e-chat, November 12)

For Kim, 'pumpkin time' was brand-new English. Her dictionary had a couple of meanings for *pumpkin*, such as 'idiot' or 'kind of celebrities,' and although she had never heard the expression 'pumpkin time,' she was able to understand the meaning very easily. When Tarry used the words 'pumpkin time,' she understood the meaning so quickly because it was time to finish the e-chatting. She said that she liked the expression and that she would never forget it (November 18).

In the interview Kim proudly asked me whether I knew the meaning of 'pumpkin time.' It was very new to me! I looked it up in a dictionary, but there were no references to it. I searched the Internet for information. However, 'pumpkin time' was used very rarely in normal conversation, but it might be used in the context of Halloween. Children often talk about pumpkin seeds in connection with Halloween. The expression might be used as I understood it, but I wondered why Tarry, Kim's partner, had used it. In an interview he laughed at my question and felt sorry for his partner (November 28). His explanation of 'pumpkin time' was as follows:

> 'Pumpkin' is an expression that I think my wife originated. In the story *Cinderella*, the young lady is at the party and having a wonderful time. But at midnight all of her magical things will return to their original shapes. Her fairy godmother had made her wonderful coach from a pumpkin. At twelve o'clock it will become a pumpkin again. (November 28)

When Tarry used the phrase 'pumpkin time' with his partner, Kim made sense of the meaning based on her inference, because both guessed that it was time to finish. Tarry said in the interview, "You will find no reference to the expression anywhere. It was coined or made up by my wife and me." Kim enjoyed using the words and was proud of having learned this brand-new English. When asked whether she had had a chance to use the expression, she said that she had used it several times with her school colleagues. I asked the other native-speaking partner, Tomy, about the expression, and he said that 'pumpkin time' might be a *Konglish*; he had never heard of it until he came to Korea. He also guessed that its root might be the story of Cinderella. Kim had not realized that the expression was a kind of *Konglish* until I told her (December 5). What we call language has a tendency to be created and changed by people as time passes, but this was not the case.

Though Kim recognized her misunderstanding of 'pumpkin time,' she still thought that the expression was very funny, and she liked it. She was surprised at her misunderstanding, but she thought that informal language was fun!

Jung also stated that she liked informal expressions:

> So I have found many sentences that I could not understand even though I knew all the words in the sentence. My partner very often used informal English, while we tend to use text-like English. So I think I have got to learn their natural English that I couldn't have learned in English textbook. I think those informal expressions are very important when we have verbal talk with native speakers of English. (interview, December 14)

Jung provided an example of informal English that she liked very much. She had heard the expression 'conducting away over my head' while she and her partner were talking about music and musicians. As she always had done, she asked Tarry what the expression meant, and he replied that it was kind of joke, that 'conducting away' implied that he was having a wonderful time conducting his music:

> When something is 'over one's head,' it means that it is too difficult for one to understand. So he is 'conducting over my head' implies that his music is too difficult for me to understand. Well, . . . it was funny . . . for me! (Jung, December 14)

In an interview Tarry explained his intention in using informal expressions was to try to build rapport with his partner, a kind of familiarity, friendship, or informality that would put Jung more at ease (November 28). His intentions impressed me. He argued that in CMC, without nonverbal clues such as facial expressions, making the environment relaxed enough for casual conversation might be achieved through using informal expressions. He also pointed out his very thoughtful intention that he wanted to develop a kind of verbal intimacy with his partner by introducing her to expressions that had meaning for only the two of them. It was a kind of secret community for private communication or in-group talk.

***Cultural Awareness***

> How many of you know that the date of Thanksgiving Day is different from that of the States? (informal group interview, Jung, November 24)

In the informal group interview Jung asked the other Korean participants and me about the date of Thanksgiving Day. Whereas Thanksgiving Day is not one of the main holidays in Korea, it is for Canadians and Americans. She asked us again how many Korean English teachers would know the date of Thanksgiving Day in Canada or in America. I did not know the difference, and neither did the others. She cited her online dialogue with her partner:

> Jung: When is Thanksgiving day?
> Sharon: Nov. 27th
> Jung: What do you usually do? Or eat?
> Sharon: That's American Thanksgiving, Canada's is in October.
> Sharon: I'm cooking a turkey, a ham, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, gravy, cranberry sauce, salad, bread, pumpkin pie and green beans.
> Sharon: It'll take me all day to cook!
> Jung: Is Thanksgiving Day different between in Canada and in America? (e-chat, November 20)

Jung also recalled an incident on Halloween, October 31. Although celebration of Halloween was not included in the regular English curriculum, students in some schools

and kindergartens prepared special costumes that helped them to learn about the holidays of people in English-speaking countries. Jung had not prepared teaching materials for the holidays because she had to follow the regular curriculum, which she had to finish by December 31. At the end of the class period a student showed a photograph that depicted the customs of Halloween; it included a pumpkin and a special costume. The student asked her in the presence of all of the students why children in the photograph wore special costumes and why strange-looking masks were hung on the wall. She had no idea!

Along with specific cultural information about Halloween, Jung cited another example about her surprise at the differences between Americans and Canadians from her partner's point of view:

> Jung: What differences do you think are there between Canadian and American?
> Sharon: Canadians tend to be more laid back and we don't like going to war. Well, Americans don't like war either but they aren't afraid of going to war.
> Sharon: Canada is bilingual and the States isn't, even though Spanish is spoken by almost half the country. (e-chat, November 20)

Sharon had given Jung information that helped her to understand North American culture. She assumed that the people of the two countries would think that they were very much alike in terms of their thinking, behaviors, or beliefs. It reminded her of her own experiences. When she had stayed in Europe for 15 days during her summer vacation, she had a chance to talk with foreigners at a bar where people from other countries enjoyed talking. One of them asked her if she was Japanese and told her that he could rarely distinguish the difference between Korean and Japanese in terms of their pronunciation, tone, and appearance. This was a surprise to Jung. Likewise, she had assumed that Canadians and Americans were alike in terms of their behaviors and beliefs and that they would regard themselves as similar. She did not understand the European's confusion between Korean and Japanese, but she also had misconceptions of Canadians and Americans.

Jung and the other participants were not aware of the range of languages used in America. She and the other participants at the meeting did not know that Spanish is spoken in many parts of the country; they thought that English was the main language in America.

The Korean participants also had opportunities through the informal group interviews to share Tomy's view on Korean people who were living in America. One of Shon's students wanted to go to America to study, and Shon wanted Tomy to give her some advice about how to adapt easily to living in America:

> I think it's kind of a complex. But I think many people from other countries have no difficulty feeling American, because it's such a melting pot. But Korean Americans stick together a lot and don't assimilate as well as others. Then, I heard that when they come to Korea, many native Koreans don't treat them well. One Korean had a mental conflict in America society. He was not a perfect American and he was not a Korean. I've heard a lot about that. Say to her to try to get along with native speaking friends, visit their homes, or join community events or something like that. (e-mail from Tomy, November 24)

To the Korean participants at the informal group meeting, Tomy's advice was not new cultural information about living in foreign countries; rather it was an opportunity to consider themselves and their identities. They felt that it would be practical information for the student to have when living or getting together with other Korean and American friends in the country. They talked about the strong Korean identity compared to that of the people of other countries and discussed the idea that it might have a strong connection to one of the main social issues at the time: discrimination of minor ethnic groups living in Korea. The media—newspapers, television, and radio—made a big issue of the social problem of discrimination against the minority people who had come to Korea from South Asia with the hope of being successful. These people were reported to have been exploited excessively by Korean employers, which might be because of the strong identity of Korean people. The participants agreed that these issues are mainly because of Koreans' traditional collective identity, which emphasizes in-group unity.

In talking with Tarry, Kim realized that her partner was confused about the Korean employment system (November 15). It was clearly discrimination in Tarry's view that qualified people with teaching certificates did not have an opportunity to apply to teach in Korean schools because of the age restriction:

> Tarry: That would not be allowed in Canada. It would be a form of discrimination. Age discrimination!
> Kim: 40 years old is the last chance.
> Tarry: Even 65! If a person can do the job, age cannot be used in hiring.
> Kim: You are right in some way.

> Tarry: Well, the idea could be abused and it is true.
> Kim: There is a limit in age to be a government worker in Korea.
> Tarry: But we say that we cannot use age, sex, race, creed, or sexual orientation as a form of discrimination. We must not use 'tradition' to justify bad practices. (e-chat, November 15)

Although Kim agreed with Tarry that the age restriction might be regarded as discrimination in hiring teachers, she was not sure which custom was reasonable. In the interview Kim recognized that in some way the issue should be flexible according to the culture of the society (November 15). Korea is regarded as a hierarchical society that has been influenced by Confucianism, and the distinction between senior and junior has been clear. Kim thought that in a society such as Canada or America, where people were allowed to say "Hi" to their grandfather as well as to their brother, they would have quite different views on ways of dealing with people. However, Kim was not sure which system was reasonable; thus she began to think seriously about the issue.

Jung gave an example of the differences in the educational systems of Korea and Canada (September 20). In the interview she asked me whether I had had an opportunity to visit elementary schools in Canada. She wanted to confirm what her partner, Tarry, had said about the number of students in classrooms:

> Jung: How many students in the elementary class in the US?
> Tarry: It depends on the school and the grade level. Of course, I am Canadian, so I can't tell you too much about the USA. About twenty would be the maximum for a primary class; and a few more as the years go up.
> Jung: I'm very sorry. I have 36 students in my class. That's enough. But sometimes they make too much noise.
> Tarry: Thirty-six would be about double the legal maximum in Canada. That many students in one class would make it impossible to have any one-on-one time with individual students. That would be totally unacceptable.
> Tarry: Why were you sorry? (e-chat, September 17)

Jung thought that it would be "fantastic" to have a maximum of 20 students in a classroom! However, she could understand why she had to have so many students in her class: It was because of the large population in such a small country. She was jealous of Canadian teachers. She believed that in a classroom with a maximum of 20 students, individualized teaching and learning would be possible by dividing the class into several groups according to their levels of achievement (September 20). This system had been strongly recommended in the national curriculum, but it is one of the difficulties that

teachers in elementary school encounter in attempting individualized study not only because of the number of students, but also because of the many different levels of ability of the students in one class. Jung said that if students were divided into groups according to their ability levels, there would be 10 or more groups, which would make it very difficult to control the class. Thus, she hoped that in perhaps 10 years she could have a similar number of students in her class to that in Canadian schools. She also believed that it was not a financial issue, but rather that it required a change in concept about teacher-student ratios.

Jung also recognized that Tarry perceived her use of 'sorry' differently because he did not understand why she had said, "I am very sorry." It was not intended as an apology as though she had done something wrong; rather, it was similar to the expression used to show her envy of the Canadian system, not in the sense of repentance. Jung and Tarry had understood 'sorry' differently.

To the Korean participants their conversations with their partners on Halloween, Thanksgiving Day, their perceptions on North American people, discrimination, Korean people's strong identity, and the educational system were valuable. The opportunities allowed them to stretch their views on native English speaking people and their culture and to share their partners' views.

The findings in this study concur with Nunan's (1999) suggestion that CMC has emerged as an effective method to enable EFL learners to learn the target-language culture, based on the positive findings of studies on CMC and technological development . The cultural aspects of the target language are also significant. Sehlaoui (2001) and Warschauer (1999) also argued that computer use in relation to cultural understanding is a powerful device to foster foreign-language learning. Culture is one of the most important factors in terms of communicative competency; hence, foreign-language learners need to experience the authentic cultural aspects of the language through interacting with native target-language speakers. To many EFL inservice teachers like those in this study, their lack of confidence in speaking English is due in part to their lack of knowledge of English culture. This CMC experience gave them opportunities for exposure to the cultural aspects of the English language. Their

improved English fluency and understanding of the culture of the language were clearly a result of their interactions with native speakers.

***Looking Back at Korean Culture***

All of the Korean participants in this study agreed that their initial purpose for joining the research was to have opportunities to improve their English. They had not expected to have opportunities to look at themselves through the ways that their partners presented themselves and their critical views of Korean society. In an e-chat with Shon, Tomy wrote, "You might think American kids are naughty. But when our parents tell us not to do something, we wonder 'why?' It's just curiosity about something forbidden. It should be encouraged" (September 28). Shon thought that it was not because of her lack of English proficiency that she had difficulty in defending herself, but rather it was the lack of conversational patterns. Shon was frustrated when she found that she could not support her argument during the e-chats. Even when Shon did not agree with Tomy's argument, she often had to simply concede. However, after she finished the e-chat, she felt that what she had said was not what she had really intended to say. She read the dialogue by scrolling back and forth to see what had made her hesitate to defend herself. She finally came to the conclusion that she was not familiar with the practice of asking "Why?" but she was impressed with the way that her partner had defended himself.

Shon compared Tomy's effective way of arguing with her students' behavior and explained the change in her teaching as follows:

> His examples were very specific and logical. He is very good at discussion and argument. He told me that he had been accustomed to how to discuss effectively from his elementary school life. How are our students? Even though discussion is encouraged in classrooms recently, it is not easy to be changed at one time. You know, what does mother say to her son going to school in the morning? The answer is 'Listen carefully to your teacher.' Our students are not allowed to interrupt their teacher during his or her lecture. So recently I encourage my students to discuss freely because I came to recognize the importance of learning the way of discussion or argument. That is, I have clearly been motivated to change the teaching and learning way in my class. I try to keep asking my students 'why.' (interview with Shon, October 3rd)

Shon stated that asking 'why' might help to represent one's thoughts effectively, which is essential to effective discussion, and she began to consider the factors that facilitate active and effective participation in discussion.

In relation to the way of discussion, Shon cited an example (October 3). She had had an opportunity to interview student teachers who wanted to be employed by government. One of the interview questions was about their hobbies, and to her surprise, the hobbies of 99% were reading books, listening to music, watching sports, or watching movies. Very simple! More surprisingly, 90% could not say why they liked their hobbies, how they came to like them, or what their hobbies were like. Most of their answers were "Just because" and "I like it." This was evidence, said Shon, that Korean students are not strong in the culture of discussion. The prospective teachers had not been able to support their arguments. Shon commented, "So I would say that I have learned not only English but also other things such as the way of defending myself and its implication to my students" (Shon, October 3).

The next example shows Tomy's critical views of Korean culture. He criticized Koreans' uncritical views on the commercial benefits of companies who exploit Halloween. Likewise, the Korean participants felt that they took their culture for granted as well:

> Halloween Day is not for children or ordinary people in Korea, but for companies. Again, here in Korea, companies will charge more for something that is a little different, even if it doesn't cost them much to make. They really take advantage of ordinary people. It's a shame and people don't seem to realize it. (e-mail from Tomy, November 4th)

Tomy described his views on Halloween in Korea in his e-mail to Shon. He said that Americans had trouble understanding their way of celebrating the day. People tended to spend too much money on this day. Shon said in an interview that she was also confused about how Halloween became popular with Korean children (November 7). After talking with her partner about it, Shon reflected on Tomy's critical view of Korean Halloween. He told her in his e-mail that he was surprised to read in a newspaper about Halloween in Korea. The newspaper said that one kindergarten student's mother spent US$500 preparing Halloween costumes and presents for her child's friends. From her partner's point of view, Korean people tended to follow the superficial customs of other

cultures without understanding the culture, how others celebrate a special day, and where the day originated. In the interview Shon discussed me her partner's view on Korean 'Days':

> In America, people use old clothes for Halloween for decoration that they don't need much money for that. Teaching critical thinking is very important to our students. *Day* is so popular in Korea. The *Days* were spread out by the companies, such as cucumber production organization, *ppapparo* (stick-like chocolate) company, wine company, and diary production companies for the commercial purpose. On the day, huge amount of their products is sold. This phenomenon occurs because of the lack of critical thinking in Korea. (November 7)

Shon complained in the interview that there are too many 'days' in Korea and people do not know how, when, or why the days became popular. They know in general that many of the 'days' were artificially created for commercial purposes, but they tend to celebrate them with little critical thought. Many parents buy their children *ppapparo* on *Ppapparo* Day because they know that their children will trade the stick-like chocolate with their friends. The following conversation provided Shon with an opportunity to reflect on Koreans' behavior from the standpoint of her partner:

> Tomy: I know White Day comes from Japan, but I know that the Korean companies were very happy to import it to Korea. The original day, Valentine's Day, is just one day. Boys and girls give each other gifts, cards, and chocolate. But I guess companies can make more money on two days instead of one day.
> Shon: Oh, really, I did not know that boys and girls both give gift each other on Valentine day. Have you heard of any story about the days? . . .
> Shon: You have the holidays too. How about people in your country?
> Tomy: Yes, we don't have White Day in the West. Only Valentine's Day.
> Tomy: Of course, we have Halloween, too. You might say that it is too commercial, but it started long before snack companies could make money from it. Most treats were made at home. It's really fun. (e-chat, November 4)

In the interview Shon said that she had questioned whether companies might attempt to sell their products to people in America (November 7). If so, she felt that there might be reasons that the companies' strategies did not work. She assumed that it might be the critical views of people like her partner, and she believed that we need to think about our way of viewing our world and reexamine phenomena that have been accepted or taken for granted.

## Opportunities for Professional Development

The Korean and native English speaking participants were all English teachers. They had opportunities to share teaching resources, teaching strategies, views on teacher and students, and the ways of dealing with students. They then transferred their understandings to their classrooms. As experts in the field of teaching English, they willingly revealed their ideas on education to their partners. As Jung stated, it was good for her because it gave her opportunities to think about effective ways of teaching and learning English (November 29).

As Collis (1995) pointed out, EFL teachers need to use CMC to search for new possibilities for the purpose of "building professional community of sharing knowledge, intended that it helped teachers have the time and motivation to engage in reflective, self-directed learning activities outside of a formal in-service structure" (p. 64)

### *Sharing Resources for English Teaching*

> Sometimes I talk with my partner about teaching techniques and I hope we can talk more and more. She is an English teacher and I am doing the same for English Teaching. I am gathering information from the Internet on English theory and practice. I am learning a great deal now, too. (interview with Tarry, January 9)

Jung, Tarry's partner, realized that teachers' intentional efforts to seek valuable teaching material was directly linked to changes in the students' interest in studying English (November 7). Tarry introduced Jung to a useful Internet site for English games, fairy tales, and puzzles. He believed that English textbooks are not effective enough in increasing students' motivation or interests, especially when they are bored. Based on Tarry's advice, Jung introduced the Internet site to her students, and they became excited when they saw the materials on the sites on wide screens.

Other recommended sources besides the Internet included a great number of reading materials, worksheets, theories of grammar, pictures, and lesson plans. It was amazing to Jung. Sources for teaching English included in *Readers' Theatre* were very helpful as new resources. Jung e-mailed Tarry: "You really are something! Thank you for sharing them with me. I'll use these materials when teaching and learning English" (January 4).

Jung recognized from her experiences that the information exchanges regarding practical teaching resource are essential for teachers' professional development. Besides Internet resources for teaching English, they also exchanged ideas about how to teach students authentic culture and how to cope with the culture in English curriculum. The English textbook they had been using did not address how to create effective teaching materials, how to apply them to the classroom context, or how to lead the class in English to motivate the students. For example, when Jung taught her students about Halloween, she showed them pictures and explained it in a simple way. The textbook for the English curriculum contained so many objectives that she did not have time to design interesting activities for the students. Jung found that Sharon's approach to teaching the culture of Halloween was much different from hers:

> She had her students do activities such as cutting pumpkin or putting on Halloween clothes by explaining Halloween Day in English. My partner explained to me that she wanted to provide her students the opportunity to feel the real situation of the Halloween culture. (interview with Jung, November 7)

On Halloween Jung was not supposed to teach her students about the day as part of the English class. However, one of her students brought a picture related to Halloween and asked Jung to explain it. She did not have much knowledge of it, but she explained as much as she could about the customs of Halloween. She had already recognized the important role of culture in English learning, but she also recognized that she did not have enough knowledge to explain about the culture of Halloween. Teachers' understanding of English culture is important in the context of the Korean classroom because one of the main aims of the national curriculum is that English learners understand the culture of English-speaking countries. Teachers' cultural understanding can be increased through continuous interaction with native-speaking people.

***Sharing Approaches to Teaching English***

> For example, if all students are learned one expression 'I am fine, thanks. And you?' to answer for the question 'how are you?" It may be very funny in a way. I have heard of one story. When a boy hurt by car accident, and policeman comes to him asking 'how are you?' then the boy's answer may be 'I am fine, thanks. And you?' It is because that is what he has been taught to say. He doesn't know how to make a new sentence. He should say 'Oh, my arm is broken, I am

> hurting!" He has only learned to parrot the sounds. (e-mail from Tarry, December 12)

To avoid this funny situation, Tarry argued in his e-mail that the sentences should be kept as simple as possible and the words should be replaced one by one. He believed that this method could empower students to make new sentences according to the situation, and he wanted to emphasize one element at a time. Kim agreed with Tarry that chunk-style learning is problematic because it sometimes causes funny incidents like that in the above example (December 14). For example, when Kim asked a student, "Who are you?" the student answered, "I am fine." The student misunderstood Kim's question as "How are you?" In the English curriculum for third graders, teaching them how to write letters, phrases, and sentences is not included because curriculum developers worried that students might lose interest or feel stressed out in learning English, that it might cause such an incident.

In the Korean English curriculum for elementary school students, it is strongly recommended that they study chunks or contractions. Tarry suggested to Jung that teachers should use various different expressions; otherwise, they would repeat phrases parrot-like. He believed that the strategies for teaching English to elementary students need to be reconsidered. Kim, very knowledgeable in the field of teaching English, confirmed her belief that students need to learn step by step in her conversation with Tarry:

> Tarry: Unfortunately, too many teachers use contractions when they are teaching English! Such as, I'm, and He's, and so on! Contractions should be taught only after students can create adequate English sentences!
> Kim: I use contractions usually, and most contents of the text do.
> Tarry: And they should not. It is one of the reasons why Koreans are not learning English. Students need to learn the basic structure of the language.
> Kim: I agree with you somehow.
> Tarry: Contractions hide the structure and confuse the student. Students learn by 'parroting' only.
> Kim: Today, I taught a sentence.' I'm sick.' But my students make an error to pronounce it as ' I sick'
> Tarry: Exactly! They need to see and hear: I am sick. Parrots are birds that can be taught to make sounds like speech but they have no idea what they are saying. (e-chat, December 15)

Kim said in an interview that she believed that the Korean national English curriculum places too much emphasis on English learners' motivation and interests by neglecting their exposure to the written form or a step-by-step approach (December 22). In the curriculum, teaching students how to write English letters, forms, and structures has been strongly discouraged, particularly in elementary English classes. As Kim pointed out in the interview, if the learners are in situations where they are exposed to diverse or continuous authentic input, the analysis of forms of contraction might not be necessary. In this situation the learners could encounter a variety of methods of input. For example, as Tarry pointed out, if the learners are exposed to input such as "I am fine," "so-so," "not bad," "wonderful," "bad," or "not very good," what Tarry called the learners' 'parroting' would not result. However, Kim said in the interview that some analysis should be taught to novice English learners in an EFL situation. When students hear expressions such as "How are you?" and "Who are you?" they sometimes become confused. Kim gave a funny example. While she was in her English class, a student knocked and opened the door suddenly. Speaking only in English, Kim asked the boy, "Who are you?" His answer was, "I am fine, thanks, and you?" It was exactly the same thing that Tarry had pointed out, and Kim began to rethink the ways of teaching sentences to her students.

Tarry believed that the best way to learn English in the EFL context might be through reading and writing in which students are able to understand the basic structure of sentences. He suggested to his former partner, Jung, that reading books at a lower level than her actual reading ability might be helpful. He emphasized that reading should be fun (November 6). As a criterion for selecting English books, he suggested that if learners have to look up words in a dictionary, then the book is too difficult, that reading the easiest books is the best way for a language learner to learn English. He recommended that Jung read advanced children's books. However, she became upset when he suggested that she read children's books (November 12) because she felt that Tarry devalued her English proficiency. He insisted that she look for advanced children's books in English bookstores because there are some interesting books that might help her to improve her English reading skills more than anything else. In his e-mail Tarry emphasized the importance of reading easy books again and again for Jung and her students:

> It is true for everyone! But remember . . . the more that you read, the easier it will be for you to remember. Why the easiest? Because they are easy to read and you will be thinking IN SENTENCES when you finish reading them six (6) times each! Yes, six times each!! Why? Because repetition is soooooo important for fluency! When you finish them, you will come back for a more difficult set. But only the next level. They will still be very easy for you. If you want to be fluent . . . READ, READ, READ! But read the same things again and again and again . . . until you are reading sentence by sentence, not phrase by phrase or word by word! (e-mail from Tarry, November 6)

In the last sentence the words "until you are reading sentence by sentence, not phrase by phrase or word by word" touched Jung. In the following interview, she stated that it was quite plausible that she could reach a higher level of English if she could read sentence by sentence, and those sentences might appear in her mind someday (November 12). At last Jung went to the bookstore that Tarry had recommended and bought two children's books for herself, rather than for her students. The following is Jung's e-mail to Tarry to thank him for his suggestion:

> Tarry, I really appreciate your advice about what to read and how to read. These days I am reading some children's books. When I read them once, I was surprised at knowing that those books were my actual level. I came to know that reading was much more useful for me to acquire English. Indeed, I did not know that. I used to read novels, cartoons or 'Time' magazines. How foolish I was! I thank you for teaching me, again. (November 13)

Tarry responded to Jung's e-mail as follows:

> I am very happy that my advice on reading is helping. Reading should be a pleasure. We learn best when we enjoy what we do. Apply your insight to your teaching! (November 15)

After having discussed the crucial role of reading books to improve English proficiency, Tarry and Jung exchanged their views on the role of writing in the field of English teaching. In Tarry's interview and his e-mail to Jung, it was evident that he regarded writing as important as reading from his teaching experience (December 3). He believed that if a student could write something, he/she could say it; and if the learner could write it, then he/she would remember it. In his interview Tarry said that he often asked his students to write sentences with similar structure again and again, but he did not ask them to memorize them. What he wanted was not repetition of the original sentences; rather, he

often let the students write their own sentences based on those that they had already read and written. He expected his students to create new sentences.

Jung was skeptical that writing practice should be a higher priority than speaking and that accuracy should be more important than fluency. From her experience and knowledge, speaking practice or fluency should be emphasized more. In her e-mail to Tarry, Jung argued speaking practice and fluency should be more important than writing and accuracy:

> I don't understand what you said in your letter. 'Writing is first, then speaking.' We don't teach writing first. Of course, I learned it was more effective to teach four language skills simultaneously. If I teach writing before speaking to 3rd grade students, isn't it difficult for them? How does writing work on speaking? Should they memorize the words and sentences to speak? If I often write letters to you, can I speak English fluently, too? ^.^ (November 17)

Jung showed her satisfaction in the interview when she said, "I won the game in English!" (November 19) because she had received only a short answer from Tarry on the writing issue. "I do not emphasize the accuracy only! I think one by one approach should be emphasized" (November 29). She was happy because she was sure that her belief on the issue was right for at least elementary school students. In the interview Jung showed her satisfaction in such a way that she was able to have a professional discussion in English with a native speaker. Even though she thought that Tarry's suggestion of emphasizing writing might not be very effective for third-grade students, it might be crucial for English teachers whose fluency level was at least intermediate to improve their language competence. Therefore, Jung said that the suggestion seemed to fit her, which motivated her to keep writing e-mails to Tarry (November 19). It seems that her recognition of the importance of writing to improving her English competence drove her to keep writing long e-mails by investing two hours in each.

On the same day of the interview, Jung discussed her view of teaching grammar to elementary school students. She knew the importance of accuracy in English teaching and learning from the second language learning theories. She also recognized that grammar and structure are the bases for constructing and creating new sentences and are required for people to express themselves. She knew that GT (grammar translation method) had been criticized by practitioners in the field of second language acquisition

because it had been recognized as the main reason that Korean English learners are so poor in their speaking ability. This is not to say that accuracy is not important, but she felt that there is too much emphasis placed on the accuracy of language rather than fluency. In particular, she believed that a second language should be learned in an environment where there is limited anxiety or pressure. Jung said that that is why elementary school students learn songs, chants, or games in their English classes.

While Jung discussed the issue of writing, she revisited the English teaching theory that she had studied. Even though she could not fully explain to Tarry what she believed because of her lack of English proficiency, she seemed to be satisfied with the opportunity to think about her hypothesis.

Besides the issues of reading and writing, Jung and Tarry also talked about teaching songs, which is very commonly recognized as a good approach to teach English to children. However, it became another controversial issue. To Tarry, teaching songs to students who have not been taught the meaning of the words or the sentence structure was a waste of time. He expressed his views on the issue in his e-mail to Jung:

> In similar case, you teach your students English songs!! How terrible! I know, I know. Everyone does it in Korea. I don't know why. I went over to the attached school a couple of years ago and they wanted me to listen to the students singing Jingle Bells and Doe, a deer, a female deer. . . . I was not very complimentary. I asked the students what jingle bells were. They did not know. I asked many questions about the songs. The students did not know anything about the songs. They were just repeating the sounds. They had learned no English! And hours, and hours had been spent on the songs! And NOTHING HAD BEEN LEARNED! (November 22)

Tarry believed that teaching songs to elementary school students might be an unnecessary activity if they are taught to repeat the sounds of the songs. He thought that the students in the English class had learned no English during that valuable time. Although it was widely recognized that learning songs helps students to learn English sounds and rhythms and thus contributes to the creation of a warm climate in which students can enjoy English class without feeling stressed out, Tarry seemed be very skeptical about teaching songs because he believed that grammar is the foundation for increasing the capacity to learn English.

Jung stated in the interview that Tarry did not understand why teachers needed to make English class more interesting, which she believed that all English teachers should do (November 29). She discussed her embarrassment because of Tarry's strong criticism of her teaching English songs: "You teach students English songs. How terrible!" (November 22). Jung liked songs and teaching songs to her students very much, and she did not like Tarry's view on the issue. When I asked her whether her students were able to understand the songs, she stated that they learned English songs just for fun. Even though she told them the stories of the songs and how to read the words, her third-grade students rarely understood them. Although they could not even read the letters in the songs, she loved to teach them because her students enjoyed singing them. She decided to tell Tarry about her own experience of learning songs:

> I still remember several foreign songs I learned in my junior high school. Those were English, German, Italian, Turkish. Some of the songs totally did not make sense to me but I enjoyed those songs because of beautiful music. I was crazy about pop songs when I was in college. I really loved songs like; 'What Is a Youth?' 'Seasons in the Sun,' 'Sound of Silence,' 'Yesterday,' 'Sunshine on My Shoulders Makes Me Happy,' . . . which I still sometimes enjoy singing. In ten or twenty years, my students may find themselves humming songs I taught and remember their pleasant childhood and me ^-^. Music is the international language! (e-mail, November 24)

The discussion also gave Jung the opportunity to confirm her belief that teaching songs to her students was quite significant. Using an emoticon (^-^) that represents a smile, Jung showed her strong belief that learning English through songs was very helpful to her students. It is not likely that the discussion was valuable to Jung because Tarry had changed her perspective on teaching songs, but rather that she looked back on her experiences in teaching and learning English. However, although she strongly disputed Tarry's emphasis on 'grammar teaching' when she said, "I don't care about English words. I just enjoy music," she seemed to rethink ways of making her students understand the songs. Her strong statement seemed to come from Tarry's previous comment, "How terrible!" The value for professional teachers seems to lie in the opportunity to reflect on theories or hypotheses on teaching and learning rather than to gain particular information or knowledge on the issues. Jung already knew that there is no perfect teaching approach that is suitable for all students. Through reflecting on their

teaching and learning experiences and sharing others' professional views on a variety of issues in relation to second language learning, the teachers seemed to be able to find their own suitable methods of teaching English to their students. The opportunities allowed both the Korean and the native English speaking participants to actively reflect on how they had taught in the past, how they teach now, and how they should teach for the betterment of Korean children in classrooms.

***Sharing Teacher's View***

> Our students need teachers that teach from the heart much more than the smart, but uncaring teachers. My wife is very, very, intelligent; but her intelligence comes from her heart and feelings! I wish that more teachers were like her and you. Be proud of your caring. Be proud of your heart. (e-mail from Tarry, December 5)

Jung and Tarry addressed the issues of, What should a teacher be like? What attitude should a teacher have towards professional development? Jung raised the issue by reflecting on her disappointment in herself as a teacher. She had various levels of students in terms of their English proficiency and their motivations. She thought that the poorer students in her English classes should try harder than the others; however, these students seemed to give up on achieving the goals and began to lose interest in learning English. It made her so angry, and she sometimes reprimanded them and then regretted her behavior.

She was also concerned about her qualification as an English teacher. She was sometimes not proud of her English proficiency because she often hesitated in speaking English to her students in her English classrooms, and she was not sure whether they were satisfied with her English proficiency or not. She also disliked making mistakes when she was teaching, and she was concerned that some of the students might notice the errors.

While corresponding through CMC with Tarry, Jung was impressed with his attitude toward professional development when he had difficulty in teaching students effectively because of his lack of knowledge on the subject.

***Teacher's attitude.*** Tarry regarded Korean teachers' tendency to pretend to be perfect and not to make errors as awkward. He thought that their major problem is that they are sociologically overwhelmed:

> Here, in Korea, it is not acceptable for teachers to make mistakes, or to admit that they don't know something. The problems arising from this attitude are many. Teachers tend to teach only from the texts. They discourage questions and work outside or even ABOUT the text . . . because in many ways they cannot answer questions about the text and are sociologically prevented from saying, "I don't know, but I will get back to you on that." Teachers will go on teaching something that they know perfectly well is wrong . . . only because they are afraid to admit that they have made a mistake. It is demoralizing for the teachers. They want—at least good teachers do—to do a good job, but they are prevented by the system. Teachers have lost their jobs by admitting to an error! (interview, December 5)

It was the main reason, Tarry explained in the interview, that his partner was under stress in e-chat or e-mail exchange. Online e-chats, rather than e-mail, might cause Korean participants more anxiety or frustration if they cannot use perfect English during their e-chatting. Jung's lack of English proficiency would be revealed, as it was to her partner, to the researcher, who would read all of the dialogues. Tarry felt that Korean teachers should admit that they cannot be perfect teachers or human beings (November 28). He thought that it was funny that they did not admit it, particularly to their students, which could have a negative rather than a positive effect for the teacher. Jung hoped that she could say in front of her students, "Well, I don't know well about it. Let's try to figure it out together." It was not a quite natural situation for a teacher to say "I don't know" to his or her students. (Jung, January 5)

It is not to say that teachers in Canada do not continually seek professional development. Jung was impressed with Tarry's story:

> You know, I knew almost nothing about music before I began studying to be a teacher, but then I learned that I might have to teach music! I was very worried, so I started to study music as deeply as I could. I made almost one hundred slides of musical instruments, and musicians, and orchestras . . . so that I could teach my students about music. I made hundreds of copies of recordings from the "Wilson Recording Library" at The University of British Columbia . . . so that I would know a little about music. This is the only reason that I seem to know a little. (e-mail from Tarry, December 19)

"So impressed!" said Jung in the interview (January 5). One hundred slides of musical instruments and hundreds of copies of recordings to teach his students about music in order to be a good teacher! Furthermore, he could say, "I don't know, but I will get back to you on that," and he might not be afraid to admit that had had made a mistake! She asked herself, if a teacher cannot answer students' questions, can that teacher still have authority in the classroom? She felt that the answer "No." In the interview she raised the question, From where does a Canadian teacher's authority derive?

Jung's later partner, Sharon, also expressed her opinion. Because of the great amount of work involved in classroom activities, schoolwork, or extra classes, Jung often did not have enough time to prepare rich teaching materials, which was not unusual to her and her colleagues in Korea. She already knew that the English textbook was not the best for all students; therefore teachers should modify the contents of the textbook according to their students' different English ability levels. Being attentive to the children's individual differences inevitably requires that teachers spend great amounts of time on developing teaching materials that focus on their students' different levels, evaluating and reevaluating those materials based on their students' interests or performance on tests, and readjusting them. As Jung said in the interview, "In actual condition, teachers are not allowed to have the kind of time" (January 5).

However, her partner had already developed her own teaching materials and categorized them according to the different levels of her students' proficiency by investing her own money:

> Jung: Do they have more interest than textbooks?
> Sharon: I think so because I mix up the materials and they read different books, some easy and some more challenging.
> Jung: I would like to do that. But I did not much time because I had lots of work to study about textbooks.
> Sharon: The school textbook is too easy for half the class and too difficult for the others. By giving them different things, I can keep the smart kids interested. (e-chat, December 5)

Although Jung mentioned the difficulties that prevented her from investing time and effort in developing teaching materials, she realized that teachers needed to create their own resources for themselves and for their students. "It was like a stimulator. She was

much younger than I was, and had just less than five years of teaching career. If I had kept developing my own materials, it would be an amount of one truck" (December 14).

***Native speakers' view of native-speaking teachers of English.*** It has been widely anticipated that the number of native English speaking teachers will increase according to the policies of the Korean government and public and private schools. Some of them might be well trained to teach English in an EFL situation, but some might not be. Some of them had teaching certificates prior to arriving in Korea, but others had little experience in teaching English even in their own countries. Shon and her partner, Tomy, discussed effective ways of working together with a native-speaking teacher in their schools:

> Teaching English is not always easy for foreigners. I think some foreigners are lazy and don't want to work hard. But some do want to work hard and teach well. Unfortunately, they don't get a lot of help from their schools or the organizations they work for. Most foreigners don't have experience in teaching when they get here. The schools may tell them they will hire them without experience. However, the schools should train them better. Instead, the foreign teacher is usually thrown in a classroom on their first day, and told, "teach." Then they realize it's a case of "sink or swim." (e-mail from Tomy, October 7)

Tomy, a native-speaking teacher in Korea, clearly remembered the difficulties he had from the time that he started to work in private language academies and schools and the problems that he had seen from his experiences in these schools. The issue was sensitive to Tomy, but Shon wanted to talk about it. What Shon wanted to know was how Tomy viewed other native-speaking teachers in Korea. From Shon's experiences of working with native-speaking teachers, her image of them was not very positive. She thought that one native speaker of English in her previous school was lazy but had few difficulties in working for the school. His laziness was a result of the teachers in the school eagerly wanting to have conversations with him to improve their own English regardless of how well the native speaker worked with the students. He had just spent time having chats with the teachers for one month instead of working hard for his students.

To Shon the native speaker appeared to be lazy. He had only one or two teaching plans for his students during his stay of one month in this school. Because he was hired as a circuit native-speaking teacher for seven schools in one education district, he was able to use only two lesson plans for more than a year. One lesson plan was used for many

students in the district, even though the levels of the students varied. In an interview Shon asked me, "How could he do that? The native-speaking teacher came to the school and had chats with teachers for some time, then went to his home" (October 20). Although she could understand the possible difficulties that the native speaker might face in adapting to a foreign country, she was very unhappy with what she perceived as his lazy working attitude. Nevertheless, the native speaker was regarded as an excellent teacher by the students' parents and other teachers because of his fluent English.

In the interview Shon argued that "teaching is different from speaking their native language." The native-speaking teacher took advantage, because the fact that a native English speaker already knew the language made it easier to teach in some ways than for Korean English teachers. She believed that the native speaker did not have experience in making teaching plans, and she confirmed that her view was similar to her partner's view in general on native-speaking teachers in Korea. Tomy agreed with Shon in his e-chats with her, and he emphasized the responsibility of the office of education or the authorities concerned in situations like this:

> At any rate, the office of education should be clear about what it expects from its teachers and what the schools should expect from them. It sounds like the office of education is not overseeing it's own program and it's own teachers properly. That's too bad. I would hold the office of education just as responsible for problems as the teachers themselves. (e-chat, October 17)

In the interview Shon pointed out that some problems exist in employing and training native-speaking teachers (October 20). As Tarry had already mentioned, the government or employers must train foreign teachers in teaching students in Korea before hiring them in schools. Native English teachers need to know at least the outline of the Korean English curriculum. In the current environment they can easily neglect their duty to spend time developing their own plans under the situation of Tomy's term "*sink or swim.*"

***Sharing Ways of Dealing Students***

> Homeroom teachers and subject teachers are regarded differentially to students in elementary schools. While the subject teachers often lose control in dealing students in classrooms, homeroom teachers have authorities and are more powerful. (e-mail from Shon, December 20)

In this example Shon suggested to her partner, Tomy, when he expressed his difficulties with dealing with students in classroom, that he talk with the students' homeroom teacher about effective ways of dealing with a particular group of students. The Korean participants and their partners exchanged their ideas on how to deal with students in an actual classroom situation. Tomy was often frustrated when he did not know how to control his students. In an interview Sharon also appreciated her partner's help with similar difficulties:

> I know how to deal with students in Canada, and it works but doesn't work in Korea. Kids are kids but there are subtle differences on how to get someone's attention. So my partner can teach me some points. (November 12)

Kim, Sharon's partner, suggested that Sharon consult with the students' homeroom teacher to find effective ways of controlling the students. Likewise, Shon recommended that Tomy ask for information from the homeroom teachers of students in his class. Generally, all of the participants except Tarry, who worked for a university, had had difficulties in the classroom. Students in elementary schools often do not show their respect to Korean subject teachers, to say nothing of native-speaking subject teachers. I was able to understand the frustrations of native-speaking teachers. When I had worked with a native speaker several years ago, I saw this teacher suddenly leave a classroom and shut the door with a bang, then go home. Lack of communication is one of the main reasons that native speakers lose control over their students, as Tomy explained in his e-mail to his partner, Shon:

> For some foreigners, teaching English becomes like an endurance test. Also, it's very hard for foreigners to control and discipline their students. If you visit a English classrooms, and look in on a class with a foreign teacher and then a class with a Korean teacher, you will often times notice a huge difference in the behavior of the students. It can be like a zoo in the foreigner's class. It gets frustrating. The students know that they can get away with being rude. (e-mail, December 13)

Tomy mentioned in an interview that in a situation where students show little respect to a foreign teacher, schools should find ways to help them (December 21). From his observations of other classrooms, he had noticed that Korean students often respond to physical punishment. Male teachers are more intimidating to male students than are female teachers, and Tomy regarded this as unfortunate. He was unable to understand

why students treated homeroom teachers and subject teachers, or male teachers and female teachers, differently. To explain the possible origin of the different attitude toward male and female teachers, Shon used the concept of family. In traditional Korean families a 'stern father' and a 'loving mother' are regarded as the model. Most children are taught to show deference to their fathers' authority and appreciation for their mothers' love.

Tomy discussed the issue with his partner about how to control naughty students without using physical punishment. Shon's suggestion was very similar to Kim's, but more detailed:

> The best way is for you to cooperate with their homeroom teacher. The homeroom teachers know each student's behavior and his or her unique characteristic, however they may not know how the students behave in English class. However, you can get insights from homeroom teachers advise of how to control for the naughty students. You can also make a big chart on which the students' behaviors were on listed with simple graphs then hang it on the wall in order for students and homeroom teachers can see. (e-mail, December 15)

This does not imply that the Korean participants gave one-way suggestions to their native-speaking partners. Tarry offered a suggestion to Kim about how to encourage students, and Kim was concerned about her way of dealing with students that might discourage them in terms of her possible failure to facilitate the students' motivations. While following the prescribed English curriculum, which has substantial content, she was often very busy checking whether the students were following her. She sometimes felt that she might push her students to achieve the objectives of the lessons. Tarry, Kim's partner, believed that motivation is a primary factor in language learning because without motivation, there can be no achievement. In the following dialogue, Tarry made a specific suggestion:

> Kim: My students don't use English well. I feel very sorry. And I push up them to study English in the class.
> Tarry: Encourage, encourage, encourage!
> Kim: How do you encourage your students? Just saying they are doing very well?
> Tarry: Always tell them how well they are doing. The most important thing you remember is that let them know that YOU know that it is very, very difficult! It is the best! It works for the student. (e-chat, December 3)

Kim said that Tarry's words about the teacher needing to let the students know that he/she understood or recognized their difficulties were impressive to her (December 8):

"How thoughtful he was! It was more valuable than others such as my possible improvement of English proficiency. It was really great advice to me!" reported Kim. She seemed to be very touched by the suggestion.

Responding to Jung's e-mail in which she had expressed her disappointment in her students and regretted reprimanding them for their laziness, Tarry stated his view on how the teacher should act. He recognized from Jung's e-mail that she felt that she had been thoughtless and should have been "cooler":

> You get angry with your students . . . because you care about them. Teachers that don't care, don't get angry! You want them to be serious. You want them to do well. You want to be a good teacher! THIS IS WHAT MAKES YOU A GOOD TEACHER! My wife stopped being a teacher because she thought that she was not a good teacher. She was very wrong! She was a wonderful teacher! She was not an academic teacher; instead, she was a teacher that taught from her heart! (e-mail, December 5)

Jung was surprised at Tarry's response, which was quite different from what she had expected (December 10). She recognized that teachers in Western countries set boundaries on their responsibilities. She had heard that teachers call a student's parents if they have to make a decision when the student's behavior is beyond their control, or they take the student to the principal's office. Jung believed that teachers' behavior is based on a sense of individualism. For Korean teachers it is part of their responsibility to motivate their students when they are unable to catch up on their academic work or when they misbehave in the classroom. Jung always assumed that Western teachers are not good at embracing their students. To her, teachers' behaviors such as taking misbehaving students to the principal's office or calling the student's parents are the same as reporting criminals to a police office. When she read Tarry's e-mail, her stereotyped image of Western teachers immediately changed.

Jung believed that teachers should be allowed to use sticks for physical punishment to correct students' misbehavior and to guide them in the right direction. Thus some methods of corporal punishment are allowed in classrooms in Korea, based on the concept of holistic care and the teacher's authority, which originally came from Confucianism. The concept of corporal punishment might be based on what the teacher feels in his/her heart, not on logic. However, surprisingly, Tarry emphasized the

importance of heart in a teacher's attitude. In the same sense, Tarry explained it in his e-mail to Jung:

> There are teachers that help them to grow intellectually, and there are teachers that help them grow emotionally. They need teachers to help them grow spiritually and morally, too. The three 'R's—Reading, 'Writing, and 'Arithmetic—are important, but there is so much more that they need to learn. Their enthusiasm comes from a place located deep inside your heart! (December 5)

In the interview Jung revealed her surprise: "I thought he was well accustomed to Korean culture. His view was exactly the same as Korean teacher's view on students" (December 14). After reading Tarry's response, she believed that Canadian teachers also value a teacher's heart when dealing with their students. She felt that this was not very different from her belief.

***Transferring Ideas to Classroom***

> I became to know how important the climate was when I have had e-chats with my native speaking partner. When the climate was not warm, I could not think of words, phrases that I have already had known. I felt the big influence of the two, warm climate and cool climate, through my whole body through e-chats with my partner. So I always try to make warm climate in my English class. (informal group interview, Shon, December 13)

In the informal group interview, Jung stated that during her online dialogues with her partner, she smiled as much as possible while facing her students (December 13) and that she often tried to look at their eyes to determine their emotional state. In the interview Jung frankly spoke about how difficult it had been for her in the early stages of the research. For example, when she guessed that her partner was unhappy or bored with chatting with her, she was very concerned about his emotions. They were evident through his writing style or when he answered "Yes" or "No," when there was a long pause, or when he talked without listening to her and ignored the basic turn-taking rule. Jung found online chats more difficult than face-to-face because of her personal experience, and she was able to learn how emotional states play a crucial role in learning a foreign language. She said that the first thing that she did in her class was to make the climate warm:

> This morning when I entered my classroom saying "Hi," my students worked hard writing in Chinese characters on their notebooks. They were so quiet. It was a little cold, so I turned on the heater. I enjoyed coffee looking at the students. I talked to them before the class. "It snowed in Seoul this morning! You are expecting snow in Busan, aren't you? Did you have fun on Sunday?" They soon became cheerful. I really love this mood of the morning, warm air, coffee, small talk and my students. I also know how important the climate is to my students! (informal group interview, December 13)

Jung stated in the informal group interview that when she became aware of her partner's unhappy feelings while e-chatting, a variety of thoughts appeared and reappeared to her, such as why he was unhappy, whether she had used offensive words or expressions in previous e-mails or e-chats, what made him feel bored, whether or not he was motivated to keep talking with her, if she was begging him to e-chat, or whether her partner was neglecting her (December 13). In this situation it was hard to risk saying what she was thinking, which was actually a huge impediment to her in speaking English. She tried to read her students' feelings and to make them feel free to say anything. She learned how important environmental factors are in learning a foreign language, similar to face-to-face interactions.

Besides recognizing the crucial factor of emotional feelings in learning English, Jung transferred her awareness of how important it is to read easy English storybooks. She asked her students to bring English picture books and very simple fairly tales to school. The books included beautifully colored English letters with pictures of animals. When her students started talking about the colored pictures in the books, she expected that they would soon match the picture with the letters and words in the books. She realized that simple English books that are easily understandable without using a dictionary were more useful to her, and she selected the easiest and simplest picture books for her students. She sometimes used the books during regular English classes. Some of the students were already able to repeat the audiotape, and she asked them what the words meant.

Jung was interested in students' behaviors or attitudes toward the English picture books. Some of the students did not pay attention to the letters and looked at the pictures only. Some of them tried to match the pictures and letters while listening to the tape and looking at the books. A couple of the students only tried to find friends who were

interested in the books that they had brought from home; then they would read the books to their friends in a way of assuming airs. Surprisingly, later, many of them were able to match the pictures and contents of the audiotapes that were attached to the books.

Jung noticed that students were flipping pages with the speakers on the tapes, and she tried to create strategies to encourage them to read the books. For example, after selecting the books she guided the students in reorganizing the stories into cartoons in small-group activities. Then she encouraged them to tell their own stories to the class by using some English words. She was satisfied with the new ideas, such as interesting characters and new plots, that the students created. She was sure that these activities of reading and playing with the books would be of great help in increasing their interest in English books. As Jung stated in the same interview, her belief came from her experiences of reading children's books, as Tarry had suggested.

The students talked and talked while pointing to the pictures. Jung was happy, even though she had to answer the students' questions about the English words and pictures. She said that she would work on collecting and categorizing more English books according to students' interests and levels of English (December 13).

In the same informal group interview, Kim also identified the changes in her attitude toward her students. Her story was very similar to Jung's recognition that English learners' perception of the conversation climate is crucial. Her partner had given her a valuable suggestion about how to encourage conversation, and she always tried to let her students know that she understood their difficulties in learning English. It seemed to have worked very positively because she recognized their comfort in their eyes and attitudes. She said that she began to respond to a student's anxiety or difficulty by nodding and smiling.

The Korean participants might have felt anxious when they studied English from middle school to university; however, when they worked as teachers, their memories and feelings about the difficulties that they had English learners gradually disappeared. Even though they had had English-learning experiences in language institutes recently, there had rarely been one-to-one interactions. Therefore, this CMC correspondence with their partners in one-to-one e-chats provided the Korean participants with opportunities to imagine themselves at a young age as English learners and reposition themselves in the

present in their classroom context with their added knowledge. The opportunities helped them to understand that creating a warm climate is very effective for students to speak in English. As a result of Kim's efforts, she could see her students' changed attitudes toward the teacher's authority:

> I was very happy when one of my students told me 'awesome' in the morning looking my new hairstyle. Some of the students teased me saying 'grandma' or 'terrible.' By the way, this phenomena are the evidence that my students like speaking in English, and they knew they were encouraged speaking in English. (informal group interview, Kim, December 13)

Whereas saying 'terrible' to a teacher is not likely to be acceptable in any country, Kim responded with a smile, saying "Do I look not so good?" She was sure that the student was not able to distinguish "not so good" from "terrible." If she had shown unhappiness, the student would have hesitated to actively speak English. Kim did not want her students to experience this kind of difficulty when they studied English: "Trying first, then there may exist many chances to correct errors! If I had been encouraged as the way I did to my students, my English should have been much better than my current English" (December 13), She commented, "If a baby had been compelled to distinguish the difference 'terrible' and 'not so good' distinctly from their birth, there would have been so many mumblers and mummers in the world." Her argument was very clear; her belief was based not on her theoretical knowledge, but on her direct experiences.

Overall, the Korean participants agreed that they had valuable opportunities to share their views of teachers, students, and ways of teaching. As Nunan (1999) stated, ESL teachers, especially, need to share their professional teaching skills, ongoing programs, future curriculums, mutual goals, and sociocultural awareness through collaborative approaches using CMC experiences.

# CHAPTER 6

# PARTICIPANTS' SUGGESTIONS

There are two main sections in this chapter. The first one contains suggestions for Korean English teachers who might participate in further research on CMC; the second section contains suggestions for further research.

On the whole, the three Korean participants seemed to have encountered very similar difficulties in CMC correspondence with their native-speaking partners. Although differences existed among the three participants, there was commonality in their methods of overcoming their difficulties. Throughout the process the participants provided suggestions for other Korean teachers who might become involved in similar studies and suggested areas for further research related to CMC.

## Suggestions for Korean English Teachers

Based on the participants' experiences with CMC, they made practical suggestions for other Korean English teachers who might be interested in CMC with native English speakers in order to become better communicators. The suggestions include strategies to motivate native speakers, to overcome misunderstandings, to create better understanding, to create better communication, and to learn English better.

### *Strategies to Motivate Native Speakers*

In this study mainly the Korean participants reported many difficulties and benefits of their CMC correspondence. Throughout the process, strategies were developed to motivate the native-speaking partners, such as building personal connections, sharing topics and showing interests, sharing friendly and open-minded talk, and sharing real-life issues with partners. These suggestions are valuable because they reflect their real-life experiences. The native English speaking participants also made some suggestions.

#### *Building a personal connection.*

> Build trust rather than learn English; the rest will come next. (interview with Tomy, December 8)

Tomy was one of the native-speaking teachers who rejected my suggestion of discussing ways of teaching and learning English or of school life as an English teacher. When I spoke to the participants, the same question was raised by all six participants: What were they expected to talk about in their e-mails and e-chats? They asked me to give them examples of possible topics, and I suggested those above. Most participants seemed to understand the purpose of the research, which had been outlined in the Consent Form. Tomy, however, expressed skepticism and suggested that it might be unrealistic to have such conversations with someone he did not know. He needed to know what his partner would be like in general: what his partner's daily life was like, what he/she did, and in what he/she was interested. He stressed that without this personal understanding, there might be no deeper conversations and that the dialogues would remain superficial.

Shon, Tomy's partner, also pointed out that the emphasis should be on communication itself, rather than on artificial or purposeful topics concerned with learning or teaching English. She developed her own strategies in order to create a personal connection: She described her daily life and sent photographs that she had taken during her trips. She felt that they needed to know each other for 'real' communication. She often sent Christmas cards, birthday cards, or pictures when she had traveled to historic or beautiful sites or experienced happy events in which she had a good time with her family. She had added a brief description of them:

> Example 1. Photographs attached to Shon's e-mail:
>
> <Picture1> The view of Angkor Wat.
> <Picture2> A four-faced statue of the Buddha in Bayon Temple.
> <Picture3> My husband and I in Ta Prohm Temple wound by roots of huge trees (e-mail, September 20)

As expected and planned, during the first stage of this project, Shon and Tomy talked about school life, family life, and hobbies. The topics were light, but it was the first step in getting to know each other. Later they talked about many things in a candid way, including complaints against the educational system, Korean law, people's behaviors, and comparisons between Korea and the United States. Their trust was well developed. Tomy suggested that a face-to-face meeting would also be helpful to get to know each other

better, and they decided to meet after the study. They were sure that even though they had a mutual understanding with each other, a face-to-face meeting would help to build more rapport. Their desire to meet was the outcome of the personal and humanistic trust that resulted from the CMC correspondence.

Shon suggested that the CMC correspondents talk about practical topics from their real lives, which might allow the two to perceive the benefits of CMC with each other. Through the process one partner might often help the other in their day-to-day lives. This could build personal connections in a reciprocal relationship:

> Tomy: Last summer we volunteered to get "bumped" on our flight from Tokyo to Korea, so we each have $750 credit to use for tickets to America next summer. We will save $1500!
> Shon: I don't exactly know what 'bumped' means. sorry ^^
> Tomy: Oh. If a flight is overbooked, they need volunteers to take a later flight. Usually, you will get a free ticket if you volunteer. If you have to stay overnight, the airline will pay for your hotel.
> Shon: Aha, I got it. Wow! Free! Thank you. If it happen to me, I will be greatly lucky. You know, I like taking trip very much and often do it during vacations.
> Tomy: Some flights are always overbooked. There are people who fly for free all the time, because they are always willing to be bumped. That was my first time. It was worth it. (e-chat, December 3)

As shown above, practical dialogues about their lives allowed Tomy and Shon to concentrate on the communication itself rather than on small mistakes such as grammar, syntax, or specific forms of English. They were interested in the content, which increased their motivation to maintain more steady communication, and less concerned with 'correct English,' and they became more comfortable with communicating. Before Shon traveled to Thailand, Tarry gave her information that might be useful during the trip. If 'bumping' happened and she was approached about it in an airport, she might have been offered a free hotel room or something else.

Likewise, when Tomy told Shon that he was planning to travel to Thailand with his family (December 3), Shon contributed detailed information about hotels, restaurants, events, historic sites, and traffic conditions. She knew Thailand very well because she had traveled to the country several times. Tomy was deeply interested in the information and thanked her for it because he was also planning to travel to East Asian countries during the winter vacation. Thus, they enjoyed the day's chat with their partner by

sharing useful information with each other. As Shon pointed out in the interview, her concern in the dialogue was with the content rather than accuracy in English, and neither she nor Tomy corrected errors. The opportunity to build a personal connection and trust and to be able to communicate in English without having to worry about English proficiency was "one stone two birds" (a way of killing two birds with one stone; Shon, December 15).

***Sharing topics and showing interests.*** It would be more desirable if both the Korean and the native-speaking partners had always been able to find topics that commonly interested them all, but that did not seem to be possible. Similar to a conversation in any context, each might prefer different topics from the other. This suggests that crucial factors in better and successful communication through CMC might be mutual efforts and positive attitudes towards the other's interests. The participants needed to show real interest in what the other said.

Even in e-chatting one needed to show interest before shifting the current topic to a new one; otherwise the partner might believe that he/she was being ignored:

> Sharon: My wedding plans are almost complete . . .
> Jung: Good for you. Do you teach this week?
> Sharon: I taught gr.3 today and tomorrow I'll teach gr.5. I don't have to teach the rest of the week. Actually, I won't have another class until the new school year on March 2nd.
> Sharon: I need to decorate my classroom and prepare for next year so I'm not really busy and it feels great!
> Jung: do you go to your art class now?
> Sharon: No, it's every Tuesday evening form 6-9PM. (e-chat, December 5)

In the conversation shown above, Jung usually asked questions and Sharon responded. The trend of the conversation looked natural because normal conversations usually involved questions and answers. However, in an interview Sharon reported that she was embarrassed when Jung interrupted her (December 19). To Jung it was not an interruption, but rather her effort to keep their conversations going (December 14). Sharon felt that it was superficial conversation and that it appeared as though they were interested in only their own thoughts. Sharon wanted to talk about her wedding plan first, but Jung made only one comment, "Good for you," and changed the topic, When the topic switched to classroom decoration and school life, Jung moved to art class as another

topic. It seemed that the topics that Sharon chose bored her partner, which had a negative effect on her motivation to continue to talk. In the face-to-face interaction, as Scollon and Scollon (2001) suggested, communicators might be aware of their interlocutors' feelings through nonverbal cues or space or time, whereas CMC interactants cannot recognize those feelings unless the interlocutors clearly indicate them verbally, especially among intercultural communicators.

On the other hand, Jung showed her deep interest in music and her willingness to share her partner's interests. Her e-mail was two pages, and part of it follows:

> Thank you for telling me your wide knowledge and a good taste in music. I was very impressed. I don't listen to music carefully at first. I just listen and listen again. Naturally, I come to know why I should love that music. No, I would rather say that some music touches my heart and fascinates me at the very first time. When I was listening to 'Ancient Airs and Dances,' suddenly I felt my heart moving. A sort of sadness, a longing for something, which seemed I had listened long ago. It was familiar but I've never listened before. It was 'Siciliana' in the third suite. I repeated listening and I found two more pieces I loved to listen. I bought three CDs you recommended. I knew only the name of Respighi, but I don't remember from where and when. I did not have a chance to listen to 'Messiah' yet. I'm happy to think of listening to 'Messiah' tomorrow. I have 'I Musici's 'Four Seasons.' The 'Spring' concerto is one of my favourites. (October 8)

It was not easy for Jung to describe her impressions of the music that her partner had recommended. However, she said that she made a great effort in writing her e-mails, using her dictionary and revising and correcting her errors by herself (December 18) that that it had taken almost two hours. In the interview Jung said that her expressions such as 'impressive,' 'listen again and again,' 'become to love the songs,' 'touched by the songs,' and 'felt my heart moving' were her real feelings. Writing two-page, two-hour e-mails was not easy for her. When I asked her what made her do so, she replied that she began to understand that sharing mutual interests was a core element in communication. She liked to receive a long response from her partner. As she said in the interview, the longer her e-mail was, the longer her partner's response was.

Jung also showed her appreciation to Tarry by calling him "teacher." Through the process, she began to love the songs that he had recommended, which was a kind of reward in addition to the English learning:

> Hello, teacher. What should I tell you today?^^ I watched 'I Musici's, 'The Four Seasons.' Ah, beautiful Venezia! I was thrilled! It's wonderful to watch the violin soloist play, too. I did not expected that I could watch their performance. . . . I had bought two DVDs of I Musici and Herbert Von Karajan yesterday. These days my life is full of music. You seem to take music out of my memory one by one.^^ Thank you so much for telling me about music. You would be happy with so many good memories about music for long. I also have lots of good memories that make my heart warm. I think when I get older, my happy memories would be kindling for heating my old age and make me happy. (e-mail, December 27)

One of the reasons that Tarry became motivated to keep corresponding with his partner was that he recognized Jung's interest in what he had said. Her rich descriptions of the music that he had recommended and her appreciation and impression of it also made an impression on him. Tarry knew from his experiences in Korea and from teaching English to Koreans how difficult it was for a Korean to write a long e-mail with rich description in English. Jung had described her impressions very vividly, stating, "I was thrilled" and "You seem to take music out of my memory one by one," and the last sentence mentions the contributions of music to her life. As Tarry stated, "It was I instead of her that was impressed" (January 15). Responding to his partner's e-mail, he showed his pleasure that the music he had recommended might contribute to her life. He was also happy because he knew that he was helping somebody with whom he shared his interests:

> Oh! You were able to see the DVD on Christmas! That's wonderful! You make me so humble! You bought the I Musici DVD! I am so glad that it was available! It is so wonderful! Did you like the masks and costumes? It is such a rich 'music video'! I am so glad that you were able to find it. It was like a treasure that I was able to share with you. Thank you! (e-mail, December 29)

In the interview Jung said, "Show your interest in what your partner has been interested in, and he will be interested in your interests. Then you will be able to share the interests" (January 15). It was likely that strategy to share and show one's interests that provided the motivation to create new topics and to build trust between the two communicators. It also seemed that sharing topics, building trust, and creating new topics might lead them to more sincere, deeper, more open-minded communication, which may also have bonded them into a private community.

***Sharing friendly and open-minded talk.***

> When you feel lonely, please say, "I'm lonely," to somebody. Then somebody will come to talk friendly to you. Enjoy what you do today and meet people today! Please don't worry about tomorrow too much. I read an essay today. I'd like to tell you these passages; 'People are waiting for the phone call which will never come. People are waiting for the letter that will never come. And, . . . waiting for a hope, a love . . . . (e-mail from Jung, September 10)

It is often the case that foreigners have feelings of loneliness and distraction and ask themselves, "Why am I here in a foreign country?" There is often the need for someone who can commiserate and understand. A single sincere word can defuse feelings of frustration and isolation.

When Jung received Tarry's e-mail, she was surprised at his deep emotional hurt stemming from the difficulties of living in a foreign country and a very different culture. Her concern about her partner's hurt was sincere, and she felt that it was a result of the loneliness that comes from being so far removed from family members. While reading Tarry's e-mail, she began to understand what it was like to live in a foreign country. The loneliness, isolation, and pain were beyond her experience. She said in an interview that she could read his feelings through the poem that he sent her in an e-mail (September 5). Although the poem was difficult to grasp, she understood the essence of the poet's thoughts: A young girl is crying over the leaves falling in the autumn. He says that as she grows older, she will not cry as much over such things and that she is not truly crying for the leaves; she is, in reality, crying for herself because she unconsciously knows that, like the leaves, one day she will die too. Although Jung had never lived in foreign countries for a long time, the poem was strong enough to arouse her empathy. She e-mailed her partner with friendly encouragement that came from her heart:

> If I had been in Canada without any friends for five years, I would also have gone crazy. I read again your letters you sent me few days ago. You teach smart students who like you and need you. Many friendly Koreans like to talk to you. Now, you are no longer unhappy. (e-mail, September 10)

Jung understood that her partner needed someone who would be warm and understand the foreigner's sadness and loneliness, and she wrote a two-page e-mail again. She hoped that Tarry could forget his pain at least while he read her messages. Actually, to Tarry it was not the length of the messages, but the sincerity of Jung's heartfelt encouragement

and willingness to share his loneliness that touched him. Jung's e-mail impressed him, and he felt a real friendship. In his response, he expressed his appreciation for Jung's empathy:

> Thank you! Yes, It reminds me of the story that you read is right. I am so glad that you have your husband! I hope that he is the kind of person that will hold someone until he/she feels better. I remember once . . . I was walking with my wife-to-be. We were, I think, going to meet her friend. When we met her - on the street - she told us that her father had just died. My wife-to-be did not know what to do, but I took her friend in my arms and held her for about ten minutes while she cried, and cried. But she felt so much better. I did not know her, but she needed someone to hold her. (e-mail, September 13)

Jung's e-mail was strong enough to remind Tarry of a time when his wife's friend had needed someone. It was likely that Jung's story strongly touched him because he regarded her situation in the same light as an experience that had deeply moved him. Tarry was touched, and Jung was pleased to see that he understood her message. She added in the interview that she wrote the two-page e-mail because it was what she really wanted to say to him (September 20). She felt that her friendly and sincere advice from her heart might make Tarry regard her as a real friend rather than as a superficial chat partner who was simply involved in a pedagogical study.

Besides emotional loneliness, foreigners may encounter real-life difficulties such as the problems that arise from a lack of familiarity with the foreign social system, communication problems because of the lack of foreign language proficiency, and cultural misunderstandings. They have few people to help them through their difficulties. This is not to say that the help should be limited to specific legal problems, but that even a little practical information can be very helpful to them.

Shon tended to talk about Tomy's real-life experiences by constantly reminding herself that there might be some information that he really needed. In an interview Tomy expressed appreciation not only of Shon's efforts to solve his legal problem, but also for her practical advice on places worth visiting, beautiful and historic sites, or her experiences of the sites (January 26). Shon was aware that her English was much poorer than that of her partner and that Tomy was helping her to improve her English proficiency. She appreciated his e-chatting itself. She felt that their relationship should be reciprocal (December 4), and she always tried to think of ways of being helpful to him.

She said that the most important thing was their readiness to help each other. In addition to the practical information, small considerations for the partner were also helpful to the foreigners to foster continuous and better communication:

> For example, when he was depressed, I tried to make him get out of the mood, so I gave him a funny story that made him feel better. I was hopeful that he felt as if he had a friend who wanted to talk to. (interview, December 4)

The example discussed above is very similar to Jung's story in which her partner found it difficult to live in a foreign country, and Jung tried to share the loneliness. Interestingly, the native-speaking partners were not willing to express their feelings until they thought that they could trust their partners. This trust might be built through exchanges of mutual candid thoughts, their willingness to help each other, and sharing real-life issues. If the native English speakers had perceived the Korean participants' purpose as not going beyond their desire to learn English, the native speakers would be unlikely to reveal their emotional states, which might lead to superficial communication. It seemed to be important for the Korean correspondents to share real-life issues, including emotional difficulties, to motivate the active engagement of their native-speaking partners.

***Strategies to Overcome Misunderstandings and Create Better Understanding***

One of the major difficulties of all of the participants originated in misunderstandings. Generally, it is assumed that most misunderstandings arise from mechanical communication difficulties: syntax, grammar, or idiom in their electronic text. In this study the Korean participants' assumptions that they were being neglected by their partners seemed to cause them to mistrust their partners and to feel that their native-speaking partners had little motivation to communicate with them. Therefore, the participants suggested two ways of overcoming misunderstandings: They would ask questions in a direct way, and they would try to maintain a positive view of their partners. It was interesting for the Korean participants not to directly ask something to their native speakers through CMC. Without external factors such as facial or vocal expressions in the power relationship, which is normal in face-to-face interactions, communicators in CMC may be unaware of these factors because they do not see each other. However, the participants in this study clearly kept recognizing their partners' social presence as though the native speakers stood in front of them.

As noted in Chapter 4, the Korean participants tended to hesitate to ask in a direct way; instead, they relied on conjecture. When Jung felt very unhappy because of her partner's ambiguous words "You are brave" or "You are so courageous," she should have asked him what he meant, but she did not ask him directly at the time. Assuming that she understood his intentions, she e-mailed him to say that she felt as though she were being treated like a little dog, a pet:

> There is a Korean proverb similar to 'Nothing is so bold as a blind mare.' The Korean proverb means that a little dog doesn't know how scary a tiger is! (e-mail, October 29)

Jung added in the same e-mail that she had been very upset when she read the words "You are brave," and it had taken her two weeks to send the above e-mail to Tarry after she read those words. Because of her unhappiness, she did not want to remember Tarry's words any more (October 29). She guessed that her partner was neglecting her, but later the misunderstanding was resolved and Jung came to understand her partner's intent to encourage her to have a positive attitude toward learning English. If she had asked him in a direct way, she would not have experienced this unhappiness.

Although the Korean participants had difficulties in understanding some sentences and were able to express less than half of their thoughts, they could have asked questions directly by using short and simple messages such as "I don't understand what you are saying," or "It sounds like you are neglecting me." Jung suggested that asking in a direct way would be better than remaining alone and unhappy, even though the manner of asking might be impolite.

Although many people in North America regard e-mail as a medium for short memos or notes rather than for long, formal letters, in some cases e-mail can be used for formal business communication. When people e-mail their friends, family members, or colleagues, the length of the e-mail may not be very long. The Korean participants needed to remember this so that they would not misunderstood their partner's intentions and so that they would realize that e-mail responses of only three lines did not mean that their native-speaking partners were neglecting them.

In Shon's case a short message or no reply for two weeks was not a happy experience (October 20). She waited and waited for her partner's reply; then she e-mailed

him again. She thought that if his reply was very short again, she could be certain that he was bored with e-chatting with her. Fortunately, Tomy's reply was long enough to satisfy her, and she realized that her partner might not have been neglecting her. This was very important to her. Her partner made excuses for his delayed response by explaining that he had been busy with computer, Internet, and language problems in a certain situation and with his busy daily routines. They could continue to e-chat.

After this experience Shon realized that it would have been better to e-mail her partner to ask him whether he had been busy or if he was having some problems. She should have told him in a direct way that she had been waiting for his response (October 20). As Shon noted, being impolite is better than being hesitant in CMC interaction. Her suggestion was exactly the same as Jung's. Tarry stated that, although he was very strict about his language, he asked and answered directly, which was easier than in face-to-face interactions, and he hoped that his partner would do the same:

> In CMC, I can answer and ask a question more directly than in face-to-face interactions. I sometimes ask my partner 'tell me more about it' or 'I don't agree with that' or 'no.' I hope my partner can do that, but she is so careful. She does not say 'no.' I hope that she will be able to express herself more directly and say: "You are crazy," or "You are wrong." I think that she will be able to speak more frankly because we never met with each other in person. (interview, December 10)

All of the Korean participants agreed that some of the misunderstandings could be attributed to their perceived poor English proficiency. In an interview Jung gave an example from her reflections (October 20). She presumed that it was because of her lack of English fluency that Tarry pretended to be busy and had not responded for two weeks and thus she had felt that he might have little motivation to continue to correspond with her. She was always sure that every problem was caused by her poor English proficiency and that it bored her partner (October 20). However, Tarry reported that this was just another misunderstanding (January 26), that he had never expected the English of Korean teachers who had been taught English in an EFL context to be perfect. He argued that native English speakers could never expect them to have native fluency.

Tarry's hope in the quotation above (December 10) was exactly the same as Jung's point that one should ask directly: "I think you must be bored in e-chatting with me because of my poor English," rather than jumping to incorrect assumptions about the

partner's intentions (which could result in hurting a partner's feelings and generating mistrust). Faulty conjecture and silence could also cause the native speakers to hesitate to share ideas with their Korean partners. Jung introduced a story of a foreign teacher and explained her thoughts:

> I understand. I remember that one foreign teacher told me that he could not expect to have a real Korean friend, because it was difficult to imagine Korean people's real thought. Korean always very polite and never ask why he was angry, happy, appreciative in a direct way. Foreigners do not avoid active discussion if contradictions occur. It is better to ask and answer directly with each other. I am trying to do that. (interview, January 20)

As well, Jung suggested that Korean participants needed to have positive views of the native English speaking participants' motivation for interacting with them. It was difficult for all of the Korean participants to believe that their partners were equally motivated, that they would want to share something with them, that they were interested in Korean culture, that they trusted Korean English teachers' English proficiency enough to share their loneliness or sadness or real-life issues, and that they would sometimes need people like the Korean participants.

The two main factors that caused misunderstanding and mistrust were the Korean teachers' skeptical views of the native-speaking partners' willingness to communicate and their perceived lack English proficiency. These factors were diminished through the process of building trust and empathy, even if misunderstandings and mistrust sometimes occurred at a later stage. To some extent the native-speaking people living in Korea needed their Korean friends to talk with; it seemed that they were sometimes more motivated to have a conversation than their Korean partners were.

***Strategies to Create Better Communication***

For better and more successful communication, the Korean participants provided three suggestions based on their reflections on the CMC: (a) to avoid frustration, (b) to prearrange the next e-chat, and (c) to share the context.

***Avoiding frustration and embarrassment.*** The first suggestion is that Korean participants need not revise or edit their original statements again and again while e-chatting. *Revising* here means to try to make sentences perfect by correcting, erasing, or adding to sentences that have already been typed. When asked when they made revisions,

the Korean participants stated that revising occurred when they noticed errors or awkward structure (informal group interview, January 19) and when turns were not taken in the communication. They would often erase the first sentence in order to respond to the next message from their partners. However, their native-speaking partners rarely revised their sentences. Once they wrote a sentence, they sent it before reading it again. Tarry believed that this may be more effective than revising already-written sentences (January 15):

> My partner doesn't have to have some burden in trying to keep her face. But she does all the time. I am surprised that she revised and corrected her messages so often. I was waiting for her answer for something. It says that your partner is writing a message and then it stops. There is no message. Then it says that your partner is writing a message again and stops. I think she writes a message and maybe deletes . . . and then writes again . . . and again. Why? So it takes a long time for her answer to come to me. I don't care about the bad grammar, or incorrect terminology that she often uses. (interview, January 15)

As Tarry said, revising a message again and again is not conducive to successful communication. He stressed that the communication itself is most important and that Jung's revisions of small grammatical errors before sending her message often irritated him. He thought that it was expected that even though neither of them intentionally corrected her errors, she would notice the errors as time passed.

The second suggestion is that people who want to participate in CMC should have two e-mail accounts in case there are technical problems, such as when the mailbox is full or the Internet service provider has internal problems. In some cases e-mail is not accepted because it is considered spam. Having two mail accounts is also useful when CMC is the only medium for communication. Shon sent the following e-mail to Tomy, and he asked her to check whether her mailbox was full because she had not received his previous e-mails. When Shon checked her mailbox, it was not full, so there might have been other technical problems:

> When I read your message, and you said that your previous e-mails were not delivered to me so you e-mailed me again and again. You thought my mailbox was full. So I turned on my computer. My inbox was not full, and it still worked when I try to send an e-mail to myself. Sometimes your server or my server doesn't work. I think too many people log in that time. I heard that *MSN* did not work anything including e-mail, messenger a couple days ago. Today I got e-mils from my friends through my e-mail account, which means my e-mail server

> doesn't have any problem. I think you'd better make another email address from *yahoo*, or *daum* (Korean) for an emergency. (e-mail, November 8)

Shon's mailbox was not full, and the cause of the problem was not identified. She had no problem in sending and receiving messages to and from others who were using different e-mail servers. Shon and Tomy could not find another way of communicating, and instant messaging was not available at the time; this all caused misunderstandings.

***Arranging topics for the next e-chat.*** The first concern for all of the Korean participants in the early stages of the study was topic selection. They often asked me what to discuss or how to select topics, and some asked me to give them a selection of topics before they started their interactions with their partners. I told them that whatever topics they selected would be of interest to me. I suggested some topics, but they continued to be concerned about the nature and content of their conversations.

I became more than a little interested in how they would overcome the difficulty of selecting topics. Of course, later on the participants ceased to worry about the issues of developing communication strategies and negotiating meaning. In the early stages, however, these were important issue for them. Jung reported, "The concern of what I would discuss at the day was appeared and disappeared again and again in my mind all day, even during my class time" (September 25).

Shon developed a strategy to overcome the issue. During e-chatting her partner, Tomy, introduced a novel written by the Japanese novelist Mūrakami Hiroki, *Norwegian Woods,* and they talked about it a little. She had not read it, but at the time she thought that it might be a very good topic for their next e-chat or e-mail. She was determined to read the novel and think about what she was going to say to him, and she applied this strategy to various topics, such as music, traveling, movies, effective ways of teaching English, or school life.

The time spent preparing for the next topic was also valuable to both the Korean and the native English speaking participants. For example, when Jung was supposed to talk about the issue of whether teaching songs could be useful to English learners in elementary schools, she and her partners collected information about the topic through books or an Internet search. This time was valuable for their professional development. Her partner sometimes suggested topics for the next e-chats.

While talking about how to support native-speaking teachers who worked in Korea, Tomy suggested, "Well, maybe next time we chat, we can talk about other suggestions and ideas. Right now, I have to get going. I'm sorry" (e-chat, October 20). This strategy was also useful when there was not enough time for e-chatting or when one of them had to unexpectedly leave the current e-chat; for example:

> Tomy, it is over 2:00 now. Can you e-chat more? I will be free tomorrow night so I'd like to e-chat with you again if you can. And could you tell me more about your English camp at your school next e-chatting? (e-chat, Shon, December 15)

Shon was able to interrupt the flow of their conversation in a polite manner that showed her desire to keep talking on the issue. If she had simply stated that she had to go without commenting on the new issue, Tomy would have been unhappy or disappointed. In this way, setting up the next topic was a good strategy to encourage continuous communication. Shon could prepare a couple of questions prior to the next e-chat that might also be useful, because they sometimes got lost in the middle of conversation when there was a lack of topics to discuss.

***Sharing the context.*** The clear limitation of CMC includes the lack of a physical context in which one can perceive body language and the peripheral environment: a context such as school, a coffee shop, or a restaurant. The physical context provides communicators with a social presence and an environment that might play a role in creating a positive emotional relationship.

In the research context, both the Korean and the native English speaking participants knew each other's name, occupation, interests, and views on topics that they had discussed. Although they did not have an oral means of sharing the context, it was possible to create an auditory context, which, Shon pointed out, provided her with a stronger sensation of being in the same place as her partner (October 29). It seemed that Shon and Tomy tried to overcome the limitations of CMC:

> Tomy: I do think that too many Korean singers make songs that are over-sentimental. For some reason, people seem to want that.
> Tomy: Right now, I'm listening to "Foxy Lady" by Jimi Hendrix. Somebody else is listening to a silly pop ballad. I can't hear my music. I obviously have different taste in music from other people here.
> Shon: I will try it. Just a minute.
> Shon: I'm listening to "Foxy Lady' too

> Shon: Most of Korean men don't have any interests in music. It is very rare to find somebody who has one's own taste in music. And even though they have special tastes in music. (e-chat, October 20)

In the interview Shon said that she felt as if they were in a coffee shop listening to the same music (October 29). It seemed to them that listening to the music together in the process of e-chatting allowed them to imagine that they were setting the mood in a real physical context such as a bar, a party, a coffee shop, etc. It might be a good strategy for e-chatters who want to create a kind of pseudo-community. The community or pseudo-community that Shon and Tomy created seemed to be much better than a simple physical environment. When one talks with a passer-by on the street, there may not be any common interest, empathy, sympathy, or emotional contact. In the online dialogue between Shon and Tomy, they were sharing a common interest by listening to the same music. A form of bonding may have occurred, which may have created a greater desire to understand one another and may have facilitated more successful communication.

***Strategies to Learn English Better***

It is clear that one of the main motivations for the Korean participants to join the study was to improve their English fluency. After their CMC experience, they made three suggestions for better English learning that concerned (a) the use of a dictionary, (b) the overuse of the word 'sorry,' and (c) the selection of controversial topics.

One of the difficulties that the Korean participants expected from the beginning of the study was the language barrier. All of the Korean participants used a dictionary or an Internet dictionary when the words or phrases that they wanted to say did not immediately come to mind. As time passed, however, they realized that communication without a dictionary was more helpful not only in learning English, but also in maintaining good conversation. The Korean participants were able to gain confidence in communicating in English because of the opportunity to ask and answer directly with native speakers. In addition, the time needed to search for the appropriate expression through an Internet dictionary caused a delay in the response, and the partner might have become bored waiting for his/her reply, with no idea of the reason for the delay. Further, the partner might think that the other person was not interested in e-chats or the current topic, thus blocking the mutual motivation to keep good conversation in progress.

The second suggestion for better English learning through CMC is to avoid the overuse of the word 'sorry,' not only in e-mail, but also in e-chat:

> Shon: Hospital food and service area food on the high way are worsest. That's right. Thursdays are better for us.
> Tomy: "worst"
> Shon: sorry. right. worst (bad-worse-worst)^^
> Shon: I forgot almost everything. Sorry. -short and long term memory lost-.
> Tomy: I know the feeling. I also make mistakes. No biggies! (October 10)

Shon's use of 'worsest' was not simply an error, but also an embarrassment. She instantly noticed her mistake and modified it to 'worst.' Why was she sorry? In an interview Shon said that she felt sorry all the time when she made mistakes or errors, and she appreciated it and felt sorry when her partner gave her modified input or direct corrective feedback (October 20). In the interview she said that she should have replied "Thank you" rather than "Sorry."

Tomy reported in an interview that it was becoming uncomfortable for him to correct errors when Shon kept saying "Sorry" (October 15). He was becoming reluctant to correct her errors because he worried that he might hurt his partner's pride. Although he was sure that correcting some of the errors would help her to improve her English, he was becoming increasingly unsure that she was truly comfortable with the corrections.

The third suggestion for learning English better was not to avoid controversial topics. The following is an example in which Jung was very angry about her partner's negative view of Korea:

> How dare he say that? He should recognize that I am a Korean. (interview, September 30)

All of the participants recalled that they had had at least one unhappy conversation with their partners because they had selected a controversial topic. Should this happen in a face-to-face discussion, one might notice the other's emotions through facial or nonverbal expressions resulting from embarrassment or annoyance. This might be termed *indirect expression*. However, indirect expression was not possible in the current form of CMC because of the obvious limitations of CMC in giving physical signals. Interlocutors in the CMC context use written expressions that are irretrievable once sent, and CMC users must therefore be careful in selecting words or expressions. It

was particularly difficult for the Korean participants, as nonnative speakers of English, to refute statements made by the native speakers because of their lack of English competence. In some cases a partner may have decided to leave the CMC, whereas others may have wanted to continue to discuss the controversial topics.

When Tarry, Jung's partner, expressed his negative views on Korean driving habits and inconsiderate behavior in restaurants, Jung was so unhappy that she stopped the e-chats and e-mail for some time. She said in an interview that she felt that her partner was prejudiced against Korean people (September 30). However, Kim, Tarry's later partner, dealt with the issue differently and sometimes agreed with her partner's view. She often asked him about Canadians' behavior in similar situations. In an interview she said:

> Moreover, I have found that my e-chat messages were getting longer when the topic was sensitive to me, such as Korean English teacher's attitude toward learning English, the way of marking students' record, the way of controlling the students, the 'awkward' system of seniority in Korea, etc. So I think controversial topic is good for me because it gives me a desire to persuade him. In the case, I could clearly remember what I discussed. Further, I have found that I kept speaking without waiting his turn because I had a lot of opinions I wanted to show to him. (November 20)

As Kim admitted in the same interview, she sometimes could not remember their conversation when the topic was less interesting. Although she reads and writes only in English during the chat time, she thinks in English and Korean. Because she had been in a hurry to think of good English expressions, she could often not maintain the points that she wanted to argue. However, in the case of controversial topics, her thoughts were clear, and she was able to argue her points successfully. It seemed to be very helpful in concentrating on the topic. She said that the more controversial a topic is, the better it is for English learners.

However, it is likely that the Korean participants needed to avoid sensitive issues with their partners such as political, religious, or personal matters, unless the partners initiated the discussion first.

**Participants' Suggestions for Further Research**

It is clear from this study that all of the Korean participants benefited from CMC with the native English speakers. They agreed that the benefits were based on the one-to-one interaction. Although they were able to search for many native English speakers through Internet sites, it was not always possible to find a native speaker who was reliable, trustworthy, and knowledgeable in the field of teaching English.

However, the participants also found several inevitable limitations of one-to-one interaction, such as finding mutually agreeable times for e-chatting and the limited opportunity to meet with other people. Regarding the time issue, they suggested a group meeting or multiple CMC in which the participants could easily meet others who have free time for e-chats. Based on their CMC experience, especially of synchronous e-chatting, mutually acceptable times were not easily negotiated. As noted in Chapter 4, the time for comfortable e-chats for both the Korean and the native English speaking participants was often very unusual. Sometimes it was in the middle of night, on weekends, or during lunch time. As a way of overcoming this difficulty, they suggested multiple CMC opportunities, such as meetings with more than one Korean and native English speaking participant.

Especially the Korean participants felt that a group meeting might also be useful because e-chatters would not feel the anxiety caused by having to take turns. In the earliest stages of the process, the Korean participants were in a hurry to follow their native-speaking partners and lost track of where their conversation was going. Multiple CMC allows enough time to read messages and think about them. This might be useful at an early stage in synchronous communication. Shon suggested building an Internet café to facilitate multiple CMC (January 20). However, Korean English teachers might be reluctant to join in group meetings if their real names were used because they might be concerned about their pride being hurt when their English proficiency was revealed. This concern could be resolved by using nicknames in the group meeting because the Korean teachers would not need to know each other.

In an interview Tomy also suggested multiple CMC for further research:

> I think that you should consider letting the e-chatters explore a little more. I mean, a chatter should be able to e-chat with more than one other person. That way, the e-chatters are likely to find one or more people more compatible; and would, therefore, spend more time e-chatting—and more often—and have more interesting things to e-chat about. Thus the subjects would gravitate toward partners that were more compatible. When people have friends, they usually have a group or circle of friends and they choose from time to time to spend time with one or the other. Sometimes we have a best friend, but we tend to spend a little time with all of them. I think that it would be better to choose a 'circle' of e-chatters. (January 18)

As Tomy pointed out, people have different personalities, hobbies, interests, biases toward age or gender, and communication styles. In the case of multiple CMC, e-chatters can find someone whose interests or personality is similar to his/her own. Multiple Internet CMC would avoid the risk of including possibly harmful people. Therefore the multiple format would be safe and the e-chatters joining the room would be trustworthy. This is what Tomy called "a circle of e-chatters." Furthermore, in multiple CMC where the participants would be selected from the same district, they would have more topics to share and a more realistic context in which to share them. They would also have multiple choices of people with whom to communicate.

Context includes time, space, and people. Participants share time while they engage in e-chats, and cyberspace is a kind of space. If the two correspondents live in the same country or district, space seems smaller. For example, Shon and Tomy talked about a movie that had just been released. Shon could go to see the movie, and so too could her partner. If Tomy lived in America and Shon lived in Korea, they could share fewer movies. Thus, they were able to talk to each other at the same time in cyberspace about events that had occurred in a real space. All six participants preferred their CMC context, even though there had been difficulties because of their living in the same district and they had experienced anxiety from the possibility of face-to-face interaction. Thus, especially in the early stages of CMC, participants might prefer to choose people who live in the same country or district rather than those who live at a distance. This would enable them to gravitate toward people who can select and share the same topics.

Thus, in multiple formats a person would be able to e-chat with not just one partner, but with whomever was available whenever he/she had the time and inclination, which would provide more and various data for further research. For example, themes

might emerge such as with whom the participants choose to e-chat, how often, and why. These would be interesting additions to the data. A longer research period might be recommended in this case to allow the participants wider choice.

# CHAPTER 7

# CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This qualitative case study was designed to explore the CMC experience of Korean nonnative English-speaking inservice teachers who corresponded with native English-speaking teachers as they used asynchronous and synchronous electronic communication. The study examined (a) the benefits of CMC that Korean participants might experience as both teachers and learners through online communication with native speakers, (b) the difficulties that the Korean participants faced when corresponding with their native English speaking partners, and (c) suggestions for the combined pedagogical use of two modes of CMC that Korean participants might give their students and other Korean EFL teachers.

The participants shared their experiences and views with me through interviews and other data-collection methods. The process of data analysis began on the first data-collection date. My research was not intended to prove theory but was undertaken as a constructivist paradigm. I believed that by gaining an understanding of what the Korean participants experienced through the combined use of two modes of CMC, I would be able to expand my understanding through sharing our views with each other, and I also believed that the results or findings of this study would provide insights for further research and English language learning.

The literature review highlighted the necessity of this study because (a) little inservice or teacher-orientated research has been undertaken in a CMC environment; (b) the research contexts of most of the previous studies were different from that of this study (i.e., the Korean context); and (c) the results of those studies were mostly positive in terms of CMC use in second-language learning environments, and few had looked at the problems that the participants had encountered. One of the major problems was that these studies overlooked complexities such as the practical and emotional difficulties that the participants faced from their perceptions of their experiences. In this study I tried to gain an understanding of these complicated difficulties by considering the benefits from the participants' points of view and their suggestions.

Because this study involved only three Korean participants and three native-speaking teachers of English working in elementary schools in Korea, I did not intend to make conclusive generalizations. These three pairs of participants had their own particular characteristics and are thus unlikely to represent all teachers working in the same area. The findings might also be different for teachers working in secondary education or for teachers in other countries where English is not used as a primary language. Their motivations, their level of English proficiency, or their English learning background might be different from those in this research. Through this study I hoped that I would gain an in-depth picture of the Korean participants' perceptions of CMC, rather than just the specific linguistic outcomes, such as improvement in lexical proficiency, grammatical knowledge, or reading comprehension.

This research began with a desire to develop my understanding of the benefits, difficulties, and suggestions of the three Korean participants throughout this research period, including my pilot research. This research has helped me to expand my understandings about the three research questions more deeply and precisely. In this study the participants shared their views about their experiences, and I examined them and focused on the three research questions through data collection and analysis. The findings of the three research questions of this study are described in Chapters 4, 5, 6, respectively. The important findings are listed in the first section of this chapter. Then, based on these findings, several arguments and suggestions are presented.

Based on a qualitative research framework, I needed to identify the relationships among the established categories. This analysis has shown how the categories established during data collection and analysis link to one another. Overall, the successful cooperation between the Korean and English native speakers required mutual understanding of their partners' needs, motivations, attitudes, cultural differences, asymmetrical language power, and varied emotional difficulties. Overcoming these difficulties, the Korean participants' use of various strategies, and the native speakers' willingness to help Korean teachers of English and to encourage their active participation in corresponding with them in online conversations helped to create a collaborative learning environment. Vygotsky (1978) understood that a cooperative environment is essential in constructing ZPD. Both sides shared their candid opinions on the teacher's

role, effective approaches to classroom activities, teaching resources, methods of teaching culture, and educational issues. Thus, all of the difficulties and benefits that the Korean participants encountered were meaningful to them because they were not only language learners, but also language teachers. Throughout the process of cooperation, the Korean participants gained strong motivation, cultural awareness, willingness to communicate, self-confidence, and professional understanding.

A collaborative learning environment facilitates both inter- and intrapersonal interactions, and the two interactions are crucial in second-language learning (Ellis, 1999). Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that interpersonal interaction is essential in the learning process to reach the level of desired learning with assistance, which was achieved in this study with the strong support of the native speakers. Wells (1999) proposed two-way instead of intrapersonal interaction because it is a more powerful way of learning that enables learners to co-construct meaning in conversation. Ewing et al. (1998) stressed the value of CMC in interpersonal interactions because it allows learners to cross international borders while actively constructing knowledge by formulating ideas, sharing them with others, and changing them according to the reactions and responses of others.

With respect to the requirement of intrapersonal interaction for language learning, Gass and Selinker (2001) commented that it is the second-language learner's awareness of native speakers' language forms, which are different from those of the learner, that is essential for successful second-language learning. This intrapersonal interaction provides language learners with opportunities to organize their thoughts and use language by comparing the ways that native speakers use authentic language (Silva et al., 1996). During and after e-mails and e-chats, the Korean participants in this study compared the native speakers' ways of using English to their own ways, and they began to understand how to organize words and phrases and which words are proper in certain expressions, and they learned better ways of expressing themselves. This digital forum afforded them the opportunity to do this.

Warschauer (1999) contended that, in general, the value of CMC use in language learning is that the learners have opportunities to combine inter- and intrapersonal interactions, which in this study benefited the Korean teachers by improving their self-confidence, increasing the opportunities for interacting with their native-speaking

partners, and facilitating their understanding of the culture of English-speaking people and of authentic English use. Cameron (1989) summarized these interactions: They enable learners to interpret (intrapersonal interaction) and convey meaning and to practice language use, and they prompt meaning negotiation (interpersonal interaction). Through exchanging both e-mails and e-chats, the Korean participants had opportunities for intrapersonal reflective thinking during and after their online activities. They had more time for reflective thinking in e-mail than they did in e-chat exchanges. Even after their e-chat activities, the Korean participants read and reread the online transcripts that they had stored in their computers and compared the differences between native speakers' use of English and their own. As Schacter and Fagnano (1999) stated, language learners build ideas or concepts and find and resolve conflicts through giving and receiving explanations. That is, the Korean participants had more time for intrapersonal interactions after e-chat exchanges and during e-mail composing by sharing their personal and profession experiences. John-Steiner and Meehan (1996) suggested that sharing mutual experiences of ideas is crucial in the learning process, because it contributes to "clarification and reorganization in their own thinking" (p. 35) and it requires dialectical questions, which lead to new concepts.

Similarly, Weasenforth et al. (2002) identified the characteristics of communication technologies in constructivism as active learning, collaborative construction of knowledge, authentic tasks, less controlled environments, and thoughtful interaction. The Korean teachers' active learning came from their strong motivation to learn English as English teachers in EFL situations. Their collaborative construction of knowledge was supported by the native speakers' willingness to communicate, but the willingness resulted from mutual trust building. Their collaborative construction of knowledge was based on sharing their views. For instance, the Korean participants not only came to understand a variety of cultural aspects of their partners' home countries, but also had opportunities to examine their own culture through their partners' critical views. They began to understand a different way of viewing the world from their non-Korean partners' perspectives, and they realized that they could reexamine phenomena that they had accepted or taken for granted. The topics they discussed varied greatly not only in the areas of political, social, educational, personal, and philosophical issues, but

also in the area of cultural issues, including ways of celebrating holidays, foods, worldviews, and cultural references within language. They not only learned pragmatic English, but also gained cultural awareness of holidays, people's beliefs, education systems, and customs.

The authentic language tasks that emerged were not artificially preestablished but were created by both sides as a result of mutual efforts to solve the communication breakdowns that normally occur during interactions between native and nonnative speakers when they have a mutual desire to get their meanings across. This desire to communicate emerged from the person with whom they wanted to talk about the topics that they wanted to choose based on the cooperative environment. The more the native speakers knew about their Korean partners' level of English, the more appropriate the lexicon or idioms they were able to use with the Korean participants.

The less controlled environment was possible because no one had the role of a typical teacher with students such as in a classroom. Both parties in this study were able to choose topics about which they wanted to talk to each other based on their world experiences. One of their main concerns was education. The Korean and native English speaking participants had opportunities to share teaching resources, approaches to teaching English, views on teachers and students, and ways of dealing with students. This shared understanding was transferred to their classrooms. With regard to teaching resources, they shared useful Internet sites on games, grammar, lesson plans, puzzles, and reading material. They also exchanged ideas on how to teach students 'authentic' culture, how to create effective teaching materials and how to apply them to the classroom context, and how to lead the class in English for effective learning. In sharing approaches to teaching English, they discussed ideas on teaching reading, writing, songs, grammar, fluency, and accuracy. With respect to teacher and students, they talked about what they felt a teacher should be like, how to encourage students, and how to interact with students. They also discussed better ways of helping native-speaking teachers of English who work in Korea and ways of training them before they actually taught, and the difficulties that they encountered. The opportunity provided a space in which both the Korean and the native English speaking participants actively reflected on how they teach and how they should teach for the betterment of Korean children in classrooms. These topics that

concerned or interested them led the participants in this study to have meaningful and thoughtful interactions. This is possible in a less controlled learning environment.

These characteristics help to facilitate opportunities for inter- and intra-personal interactions. This was also supported in many studies on CMC and its application to second-language acquisition (Freiermuth, 2001; Hawkes & Romiszowski, 2001; Murray, 2001; Nunan, 1999). These researchers stated that the communicating through CMC interactions between nonnative and native speakers means that EFL learners are able to engage in collaborative learning with one another in a way similar to that enjoyed by students in face-to-face learning situations in terms of audience presence, input, feedback, and output.

Overall, the Korean participants benefited from interpersonal interactions with native speakers and their intrapersonal interactions, supported by the collaborative environment. Without having established empathy or building trust with each other, the Korean participants were not motivated to experience the intrapersonal activities.

The process of participating in inter- and intrapersonal activities with support from the native speakers of English benefited the Korean participants in many ways. For instance, there were opportunities for them to learn authentic English through both interpersonal interactions with native speakers during e-chats and intrapersonal interactions through rereading their online dialogue. The native speakers gave direct or indirect feedback on the diverse language forms that they used, and the nonnative speakers began to notice their erroneous language forms, which enabled them to consider and reconsider the differences. The second benefit is that CMC correspondence enabled them to retrieve the online dialogue at any time and to look up expressions that they had not understood during the ongoing conversation. It also enabled them to identify the context, where the conversation was going, and which words or expression were not incomprehensible. While revising the dialogues, the participants had enough time to reflect on their expressions. The correspondents could access the entire dialogue by scrolling up and down or by printing the dialogue. The Korean participants learned authentic English—words, idioms, structure, and other expressions that were different from what is available in dictionaries or grammar books or from what they had learned before. They learned how native speakers used these terms. They also realized that native

speakers do not always use grammatically correct English and recognized how crucial it is to use adjectives and prepositions correctly when they are combined with other words or expressions.

However, it should be noted that it is hard to distinguish between the interpersonal- and the intrapersonal-interaction benefits to the Korean participants because they very often occur at the same time. Therefore, I will synthesize the two by integrating the benefits, difficulties, and their suggestions into a collaborative learning environment to draw cohesive conclusions.

**Sense of Community**

The findings of this study show that in CMC interactions outside of a physical, face-to-face environment, it is still possible to share personal feelings or create social bonding, and it is not limited to impersonal interactions. The participants perceived this environment as a social 'community'; they felt a variety of emotions, shared each other's beliefs, and experienced sadness.

Etzioni and Etzioni (1999) defined *community* as having two characteristics: a web of affective-laden relationships and a sharing of social bonds and culture. An affective-laden relationship refers to a community that encompasses a group of people who reinforce one another with feelings of bonding. It does not have to have residential attributes. By sharing social bonds, a group of people in a community share values, meanings, and other beliefs; it is also not necessarily residential. Therefore, a group of people who pass each other in a bus terminal without sharing affective or cultural meanings or a group of people who meet each other for the first time in an online chat room can be referred to simply as a chain of individuals rather than as members of a community.

The participants in this study were able to share their feelings, beliefs, ideas, and values about their daily and professional lives, and their cross-cultural understandings with each other. Some of them attempted to create an auditory context by listening to the same music while e-chatting with each other. Without any other media for communication, the correspondents in CMC were able to successfully build a form of community that allowed them to access and interact with each other by overcoming geographical barriers. In general, the sense of community in CMC enabled them to create

a warm environment, to facilitate communal consensus, and to access the other's perspectives by engaging in active discourse—as opposed to a simple chain of one-to-one individuals. It enabled the participants in this study to have fun and to enjoy their time together. The Korean participants enjoyed puns and informal English, which helped them to become more relaxed. Their feelings and expressions of pleasure seem to have lessened anxieties and facilitated language learning, which might help the language learners to remember the English expressions and create within them the desire to reuse the language information.

Communication and community have common roots, reported Lam (2000). Communication has a role in the formation of social relationships with shared beliefs, and it creates or maintains social norms. Likewise, Murray (2001) pointed out that CMC users employ unique strategies that compensate for the lack of paralinguistic cues, which are normal in face-to-face interaction. Experienced CMC users make use of orthographic exaggeration, elongated vowels, the interchange of capital and small letters, and paralinguistic marks such as smileys (^.^) for social presence and emotional feelings, which may refute the argument that CMC is depersonalized interpersonal interaction.

Through the creation of a small speech community, the CMC correspondents in the study were able to strengthen their community affiliation and to share each other's beliefs, which played a role in affective bonding. In general, except possibly in some instances in the early stages of this study, the concept of community seemed to be crucial to the nonnative speakers because it allowed them to feel secure in an unequal relationship of language power, which also made them feel freer to take risks and reduced their anxiety. This environment made the Korean participants willing to continue corresponding with the native speakers, and they perceived that their willingness to communicate improved. They researched topics and English expressions for their e-chats through the Internet, books, magazines, and advertisements around them. They bought novels, registered at language academies, and searched for topics for conversations with their native-speaking partners. Through increased motivation and strong support from their native-speaking partners, the Korean participants began to risk actively engaging in e-chat conversations without hesitation. They began to ask whatever they wanted to know with little fear of making errors.

This small speech community played a role in fusing different cultures. Without a perception of community, communicators will not express candid opinions or share views of their world. One of the major constraints that the Korean respondents reported in their CMC correspondence was in the area of cultural issues: taboos as sensitive topics, politeness, and saving face. First, they saw the issue of taboos as a typical factor in the lack of trust or misunderstanding between the Koreans and foreigners. The native English speaking participants reported that they were offended when their Korean partners asked them about personal matters, and the Korean participants stated that they were offended when they were asked about the negative aspects of Korean culture. Korean and non-Korean participants have different perceptions of politeness through language. Second, to the Korean participants it was polite to write a long e-mail, but to the native-speaking parties it did not matter. It was also not polite to the Korean participants to make their partners wait for e-mail responses. The native-speaking parties, however, did not believe that this should be about a wait time. Third, teachers in Korea are accustomed to the social expectations that they should behave as models for the rest of the population. For instance, regarding the issue of editing during e-chats, all three of the native English speaking participants agreed that it revealed the Korean teachers' desire to save face even with native English speakers.

The perception of community cannot occur in a vacuum; rather, it requires mutual efforts or strategies, as the participants in this study suggested. Strategies for motivating native-speaking partners include building personal connections, sharing topics and showing interest, sharing friendly and open-minded talk, and sharing real-life issues with their partners. The native English speaking participants held the view that without personal understandings, there might be no deeper conversation, with the result that conversations would be shallow, boring, and unmotivating. If the native speaker thought that his/her partner had no purposeful intention beyond learning English, he/she might lose interest in keeping the conversations active. In order to make a personal connection, personal and candid talk, such as telling daily-life stories and sending photographs taken during trips, were necessary. They needed to know each other for 'real' communication. Sharing topics would encourage deeper interest in the other party, which would facilitate the building of trust and the creation of new topics. It also might lead them to more

sincere, deeper, more open-minded communication, which might also bond them together into a private community. Foreigners encounter real-life difficulties in situations that arise in foreign social systems, in communicating problems because of the lack of language proficiency, and in cultural understanding. There may be few people who are able to help. Practical information not only about difficult legal problems, but also small, day-to-day living problems would be very helpful to them. Efforts in this direction helped to motivate native speakers' willingness to communicate, which is essential in establishing a collaborative learning environment. Collaborative learning occurs when the communicators actively and willingly cooperate (Macaro, 1997) and help each other to achieve mutual understanding in the target language (Kitade, 2000; Lee, 2002; Nunan, 1999).

With different cultural backgrounds, both sides in this study needed to trust each other to be able to express candid opinions, which was facilitated by the perception of a small speech community. It is recommended that both parties in CMC make an effort to create a sense of community that is not '*over there*' and that is always available for anyone to pick up. This requires several factors: strategies for building personal connections, trust, self-disclosure, and candid exchange of ideas.

### Equal Participation and the Concept of Social Convention

Previous studies on the benefits of synchronous CMC interaction (e.g., Beauvois, 1992; Lee, 2002) have shown that it allows more equal participation between native and nonnative speakers. Even if equal participation was not specifically defined in these studies, it may result from turn-taking, the length of the communication, and the control or direction of the conversation. The findings of this study, however, show that it was hard for the Korean participants to participate equally without the cooperation of the native-speaking parties. Interestingly, each pair established a unique turn-taking norm.

Goodman (1996) explained that there is a process of adjustment in which learners invent language for social conventions. Personal inventions are controlled by social conventions. Without adhering to social conventions, learners do not know how or when to say something. The nonnative speakers of English in this research invented their own language, which was modified and controlled by the native speakers until it was close enough to conventional language. Convention is not limited to language forms, but it

expands to norms such as when to say something in a certain situation. In this electronic discussion forum the conventions are fewer, and the participants are part of the process of invention. In the early stages of the e-chatting, Tarry invented a turn-taking rule in order to avoid the confusion caused by overlapping questions and answers such as an indication of continuity—". . ."—at the end of his entry before sending a message, which meant that he would ask his partner to wait and he would continue to talk. Another rule was a direct statement such as "Your turn," which meant that he was awaiting his partner's message. To Tomy and Shon, explicit inventions were not necessary to avoid turn-taking confusion. When Shon expressed her difficulties with turn-taking, Tomy decided to wait until her message came. They set a turn-taking rule implicitly in the early stages. Each one did not interrupt the other's turn but, instead, waited for the other's message to arrive, which often took two or three minutes. Jung decided not to comment on a series of messages from Sharon, which made Sharon aware of Jung's difficulties.

Those implicitly or explicitly invented conventions allowed the participants to feel comfortable by knowing when to speak. The conventions contributed to equal participation by overcoming unequal language power and provided the Korean participants with sufficient time to compose and comprehend messages. The native-speaking parties also encouraged equal participation by enabling the Korean participants to make new language forms and to structure them so that they and their partners understood them. The environment of equal participation allowed the Korean participants to have opportunities for productive output, which is crucial in language learning (Pica, 1994). Pica asserted that successful second-language learning requires learners' production of output and their comprehension of message meaning. In other words, comprehension is, of course, crucial in language learning; however, it is not sufficient without language learners organizing and reorganizing their syntactic web of structure rather than just the semantic meanings.

It should be noted here that if equal participation is defined as a one-to-one ratio in terms of turn-taking, the length of the communication, and control of the direction of the conversation, it was not the case in this study. The native speakers had roughly twice as much written speech and turn-taking as the Koreans did. The direction of the conversation was controlled by a similar ratio. The unequal ratio seemed inevitable in the

two-way synchronous interactions between the native and nonnative speakers because of the insufficient communicative competence of the nonnative speakers. Nevertheless, the three Korean participants were all satisfied with their perceived equal participation in synchronous CMC because of the unique conventions that they mutually created, compared to the face-to-face interactions that they had experienced.

**Active Participation**

As Foster (1998) stated, second-language learners sometimes employ a 'pretend and hope' strategy rather than a 'check and clarify' strategy. The latter refers to a natural communication strategy such as a clarification request or a confirmation check; the former refers to "pretend to understand and hope a future utterance will cast light on your darkness" (p. 18) Foster believed that, in general, the opportunities for using natural communication strategies promote learners' second-language acquisition. The communication strategy of 'pretend and hope' probably results in missed opportunities for comprehensible input and modified output. Thus, active use of checks and requests are recommended for language learners.

Overall, the checks and requests contribute to maintaining a conversation by overcoming communication breakdowns. However, it was found that checks and requests have limitations that prevent language learners from having the opportunity to create new forms of sentences. It sometimes did not require effort to formulate and reformulate ideas to get the meanings across to their partners. For those checks and requests, the Korean participants usually used and reused simple questions such as "What do you mean by . . . ?" repetition of unknown words, and "Can you understand?" Kamhi-Stein (2000) claimed that the advantage of CMC is that it enables communicators to accept responsibility for maintaining their conversation, which draws on their previous experiences. However, language learners should regard their manner of maintaining a conversation as crucial, because if they continuously use simple requests for clarification, they will not have opportunities to share mutual ideas and experiences. Researchers such as Huang (1998), Sehlaoui (2001), and Tiene (2000) also pointed out that CMC communicators benefit from sharing their peers' and their own experiences, which assists them in maintaining mutually satisfying conversation. Too many simple questions prevent communicators from having this valuable opportunity.

Too many simple questions or clarification requests can also easily cause distractions in unexpected directions. One reason for the distractions was the Korean participants' interest in unfamiliar words or expressions, which required additional explanation from their partners. Then when they read the explanation, the Koreans found other unfamiliar words, which prompted them to ask more questions.

As well, from the findings of this study I have noticed that excessive use of clarification requests caused native speakers to feel frustrated and prevented the interaction from moving smoothly. Even though the native speakers encouraged their partners to ask anything and the nonnative speakers were highly motivated to learn the target language, an excessive use of requests for clarification is not desirable. When the native speakers lose the desire or motivation to continue communicating with their nonnative-speaking interlocutors, the interactions ceased to be active.

The nonnative language learners' purpose in participating in CMC and that of the native speakers were different. If the native speakers perceived that their partners' purpose was only to learn English, and if the interaction was continually interrupted by the nonnative speakers' focus on small grammatical or lexical analysis, the native speakers might think that they were sacrificing valuable time for an unknown (and nonpaying) language 'student.' Even if the native speakers played the role of teacher, they would likely be frustrated if they were forced to explain minor grammatical points in which they were not interested.

These findings show that when the Korean participants used active communication strategies, they felt a kind of 'fulfillment' as opposed to 'a waste of time.' To have an opportunity for active use of communication strategies and risk-taking, the Korean participants needed to use a variety of strategies such as circumlocution, approximation, or literal translation to receive an explanation from the native speakers. This process accelerates learners' cognitive language learning development (Beauvois, 1998).

From the findings it is clear that checks and requests to some extent elicited additional modified inputs from the native-speaking communicators and that these can turn into comprehensible input for language learners. Nevertheless, I also cannot help but consider the possibility of the language learner's tendency to simply repeat their limited

ways of negotiating meaning. To expand the opportunities for the language learners' output, to help them to formulate their ideas, and to create a new form of language structure requires more than simple repetition of checks and requests to strengthen their communicative competence. As Shon said in an interview, the feeling of "having discussion with" by using active communicative strategies and "learning something from" by using many checks and requests with their English-speaking partners were very different (December 21).

When Shon struggled to follow Tomy's messages by asking questions about difficult words, idioms, or sentences, and then learned the meanings from his answers, she felt that she had gained some knowledge and, at the same time, that she had been 'reading' pages from a great English book. However, it meant that she did not have many chances to formulate and reformulate her ideas in order to create a new form or structure in the target language. Even though Shon participated actively in online conversations with many questions, including many checks and requests, she did not elaborate on her ideas 'actively.' Thus willingness to take risks is an essential requirement for language learners to maximize their output opportunities to actively participate in a two-way conversation.

Active participation was often facilitated by support from the native speakers, but the participants in my study suggested that active participation also requires asking direct questions about whatever one wants to ask; otherwise, misunderstandings can occur. To avoid these misunderstandings, the Korean participants suggested two strategies: to ask questions in a direct way and to maintain a positive view of the partner. In communication through e-mails and e-chats, misunderstandings were caused for several reasons: language use, cultural differences, technical problems, and time issues. If there was a misunderstanding, the Korean participants tended not to talk about their feelings, frustrations, or embarrassments; rather, they expressed those feelings indirectly or relied on conjecture. When one Korean participant had had no e-mail response for two weeks, she presumed that it was because of her lack of fluency in English that her partner pretended to be busy and that her partner might have little motivation to continue to correspond with her. They needed to talk about their feelings directly to resolve this misunderstanding.

The Korean participants sometimes purposefully selected topics to provide as many opportunities for language production as possible and to control the direction of the conversation through active participation, which, as Liaw (1996) observed, might be a useful strategy. The Korean participants in this study often selected topics for the next e-chats at the end of their current talk or prepared a couple of topics before starting a chat. Even in these cases, however, they relied on an excessive number of requests for clarification. Therefore, it is recommended that Korean participants actively use communication skills through elaboration, explanation, or description instead of continually asking for explanations from native speakers. All of the Korean participants received "Oh, now I get it!" or "Aha" responses from their native-speaking partners after many attempts to get their meanings across using several different strategies when communication breakdowns occurred. The opportunity to use communication strategies allowed the Korean participants to develop ways of using other effective strategies. If we are to understand the importance of communicative competence for successful communication in the target language, language learners need to maximize the chances of using a variety of communication strategies, which is linked to language learners' self-confidence.

Overall, even with some of the negative aspects of the Korean participants' excessive use, the improvement in their self-confidence seems to have derived from the opportunity to negotiate meaning and develop communication strategies through their active engagement in these CMC interactions. Negotiation of meaning is accomplished through a variety of strategies, such as confirmation checks, clarifications or requests, and comprehension checks. Pica (1994) asserted that negotiation of meaning occurs "when learners and their interlocutors anticipate, perceive, or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility" (p. 494), which requires native speakers' willingness to support nonnative speakers, as shown in the findings of this study. This negotiation leads to comprehensibility of meaning—conveying one's meaning by making the input comprehensible to language learners. The opportunities to negotiate meaning to accomplish mutual understanding created more comprehensible input and output. The opportunities to use communicative strategies provided the Korean participants in this

study with the time to produce new language forms in a creative way, more than they could have in a more structured language learning context.

**One-to-One Interaction**

The opportunity for output in interpersonal interaction is crucial to fostering language learning (Ellis, 1999). In my study the Korean participants reported that one-to-one interactions with the native speakers provided them with opportunities to produce a greater number of English forms than might have been possible in structured language classes. Through one-to-one interaction, the participants could make the interaction individualized learning with the native English speakers' cooperation. The native-speaking partners came to know their Korean partners' language level in that they could control the level of language input that they thought was appropriate to the Korean participants' English proficiency. This is the difference from structured classroom language learning, where, as Carey (2002b) suggested, "any given student in a class is most likely receiving input that is either too low or too high in terms of their grammar and lexicon and this inappropriate input is typically on a topic that the student is not interested in" (p. 243). Carey further stated that in classroom language learning, even if the students are interested in the topics of discussion, it might not be possible for them to ask questions as much as they want because one student speaks at a time, and the other students must wait and listen to the speaker regardless of the speaker's language level. In this situation the students cannot negotiate meaning or engage in the interactivity on an individualized level, which is essential to constructing meaning and second-language learning.

To maximize the benefits of one-to-one interaction in CMC, language learners need to use strategies. In order to increase the amount of English that they learned, the Korean participants suggested not using the dictionary while e-chatting, trying not to say "Sorry" too often, and not avoiding controversial topics. Communication without using the dictionary was more helpful not only for learning English, but also for maintaining conversation. One reason that the Korean participants believed that they were able to gain confidence in speaking English was the opportunity to ask and answer questions with the native speakers. The time taken to search for an appropriate expression by using an Internet dictionary caused a delay in the response. The native English speaking

participants pointed out that their Korean partners said "Sorry" far too often when they were given corrective feedback. As a result, the native speakers reduced their error corrections because they did not want to make the Korean participants feel 'sorry' or embarrassed. It is recommended that topics for discussion include issues that are controversial or sensitive to Koreans. The Korean participants, as nonnative speakers of English, had a strong desire to defend themselves and their culture or to refute their partners' views when they discussed these sensitive issues. It is therefore suggested that such issues not be avoided in order to increase the opportunities for negotiation of meaning.

Because each Korean participant was paired with a single native-speaking partner for the purpose of one-to-one interaction, the range of exposure to the native-speaking culture, such as the beliefs or values, was limited. Nonnative speakers can also stereotype the native-speaking culture. For example, one of the Korean participants came to believe that it was not polite to greet a senior using the expression "Hi" instead of "Hello." The way of greeting or addressing is important in the acquisition of the social rules for the use of language. If the nonnative speaker had had an opportunity to have two or more native-speaking partners, he/she could have compared the differences between the two. Furthermore, there are many countries in the world where English is the primary spoken language. Koreans need to contact native-speaking people from different countries, which may contribute to the expansion of the nonnative speakers' views of standard and colloquial English and allow them to consider broadly what the target language (English) culture is like, because there are many English-speaking countries in the world, and each has a unique culture. It was in this way that one of the Korean participants came to believe that the expression 'pumpkin time' is standard English. These phenomena may result from interactions with just one native-English speaker. Therefore, the participants' suggestion of a group meeting may be reasonable.

One participant suggested a 'circle of e-chatters' in which each can select single or multiple partners according to the available time or gravitate toward a particular gender, interest, hobby, educational background, or cultural origin. This is not to say that simultaneous multiple e-chats are necessarily better that one-to-one interactions. Rather, it is important to have the option to select one partner from among the many possible. No

Korean participants failed to recognize the benefits of one-to-one interaction, such as the potential to maximize the opportunity for the language learner's modified output and individualized instant feedback from the native-speaking partner. Yet native speaking communicators may prefer having multiple e-chats, especially in the early stages, as a strategy to overcome difficulties such as time pressure, or a lack of fluency in typing or language competence. The Korean participants were aware of the limitations of interaction with only one native speaker, but they were not aware of the possible misunderstandings concerning language forms or culture that might arise from speaking only with someone from one particular cultural background. It is therefore recommended that the participants be provided with the option of e-chatting with one native-speaking partner out of many, or with multiple communicators simultaneously.

Overall, language learners in an EFL context compared to those in an ESL context have obvious limitations in terms of the opportunities of meaningful experience of English, which requires interaction with native speakers from the English-speaking countries. Such experiences are obviously limited in EFL environments. Interaction with native speakers also facilitated the participants' cultural awareness.

Enhancing cultural awareness for foreign-language students through language experiences is a challenging goal for foreign- or second-language teachers. The findings of this study show that nonnative English speakers became familiar with English culture, without which there will be conversational breakdown. Therefore, nonnative English learners' CMC interactions with native English speakers should be considered an alternative to face-to-face interaction in an EFL context.

Thus, EFL teachers need to have a positive attitude toward exploring new ways of teaching and learning English, which are continually changing because of the fast development of technology. I believe that CMC has strong potential in foreign language learning: It enables language learners, especially in an EFL context, to communicate with native speakers and to expose themselves to authentic target-language use.

**The Complementary Roles of Synchronous and Asynchronous CMC**

Prior to doing this research, I could not find studies about CMC on the combined use of asynchronous and synchronous electronic conversation in an EFL context. Throughout this research I realized that the participants benefited from the combined use of the two CMC modes. When they found expressions difficult to understand, whether in e-chats or e-mails, and these expressions did not require deep thinking, they tended to use e-chats to ask for the meanings. When they engaged in debatable issues, they usually used e-mails, which allowed them enough time to think about the issues. When they had something difficult to say directly in chats, e-mails were usually preferred. When they wanted to enjoy talking, they much preferred e-chatting. When the Korean participants wanted to express broad ideas on a certain issue, they often used e-mail, but sometimes they preferred e-chatting when they wanted to understand a specific and concrete concept. If they used e-mail, their partners might not know to which part of the issue the other referred, because Koreans sometimes used an 'indirect' approach.

In synchronous chatting the Korean participants struggled to follow the flow of the conversation and to provide instant responses, so that they had to formulate ideas as quickly as possible to avoid keeping their partners waiting. They needed to work quickly and to be sensitive to their partners in order to avoid an "Are you still there?" question. In this situation the Korean participants often had to forego what they wanted to ask regarding lexical, idiomatic, or structural uncertainties created by their partners' versatility with the language. The Korean participants often used e-mails to discuss what they had missed in the previous synchronous chats. The combined use of e-mail and online chats provided them with an environment in which they were both able to more deeply and broadly discuss topics that had been dealt with superficially or inadequately in their previous synchronous chats.

In asynchronous e-mailing, the Korean participants were able to express what would have been only rarely possible in synchronous chatting because they had enough time to choose proper words, revise their own sentences, and rethink the other parties' expressions. This is the unique characteristic of asynchronous CMC, as Carey (2002a) stated:

> This asynchronicity would greatly reduce the inequality of access to automaticity between the native speaker and the second language speaker. If this asynchronicity also allowed the second language speaker access to resources such as an extended lexicon, grammar and idiom, they could construct communications that were not inferior to those posted by the native speaker. (p. 54)

Throughout this process they were able to reveal their emotions more precisely than they could in e-chats, in which they perceived a lack of English proficiency, to overcome the language power relationship. For example, the difficulty that all of the respondents experienced was in their inability to express ideas in real time, which caused problems in the flow of the sequence of turn-taking because of their slow reading comprehension and writing. Second, the Korean participants' perceived lack of communicative competence resulted in complex emotions and frustration. They had underestimated their English comprehension and composing ability, and they blamed themselves when they felt that they were being neglected by their native-speaking partners for such things as their very short e-mails or inability to respond to e-mail instantly. Third, their difficulty in understanding English expressions caused embarrassment. When they received these kinds of messages, they Korean participants felt that they were being treated like children or babies (when the native speaker was, in reality, only trying to simplify the language in order to make the messages unambiguous). Fourth, English is a major language of power in today's world; hence its speakers are accredited with a kind of power for merely being first-language speakers. This brought with it some unequal power relations between the participants in this study (at least in certain communications). It also seemed that the imbalance of language power inhibited the Korean teachers' proficiency in expressing thoughts and led on a few occasions to unwillingness to communicate. In e-mail writing the Korean participants had enough time to use the dictionary, correct errors, and reread their sentences to make them clear, whereas in e-chatting it was difficult to create correct sentences in a short time. To the native-speaking partners, waiting required patience, and they considered this more difficult than reading messages with small errors. The Korean participants were able to resolve many of these difficulties through asynchronous CMC by writing candidly and removing misunderstandings, which led to better communication.

**Suggestions for Teachers of EFL**

The findings of this study suggest that teachers of EFL find ways of using both asynchronous and synchronous CMC through which they can correspond with native speakers of English. Even though they had many difficulties, there were also a great many benefits for both the language learners and the language teachers. Among the benefits, the key benefits of CMC use were for teachers of EFL.

All teachers should use the best teaching approaches for all students regardless of their age, level of achievement, culture, or educational background. Teaching approaches or strategies depend on the students' characteristics, the teachers' beliefs, environmental factors, and many other variables. However, it is the teacher's responsibility to do his/her best to find more effective approaches for students.

A person views the world from his or her experiences in teaching and learning in mainly one culture. A worldview is constructed socially and culturally. In other words, teachers in a particular culture or of a particular educational background are likely to have common beliefs or attitudes on a particular teaching approach. Thus, teachers in any culture or educational background need to have opportunities to examine their beliefs about teaching approaches by sharing with teachers in different cultures or with different educational backgrounds. Through the process of talking and sharing their beliefs, teachers are expected to reflect on, reframe, and reconstruct themselves as teachers. The Korean participants in this study agreed that continuous conversation with their native-speaking partners allowed them to rethink the beliefs that they had taken for granted about teaching approaches for their students.

Cross-cultural awareness cannot be separated from language learning and teaching. As Sehlaoui (2001) and Warschauer (1999) pointed out, culture is one of the most important components of communicative competence; hence foreign language learners and teachers need to experience the authentic cultural aspects of the target language through interacting with native language speakers. Chang and Hsu (1998) suggested that nonnative English speakers' unfamiliarity with English culture provokes conversational breakdown. The Korean participants in this study learned how English is used culturally in different ways according to the situation. During her participation in this study, one of the Korean participants built her own website to encourage visiting

teachers and her students to talk about English only in English. Similarly, Gonzalez-Bueno and Perez (2000) suggested that nonnative-speaking teachers of EFL need to perceive CMC as an effective method of learning and teaching a second language in EFL contexts. Freeman and Freeman (1998) contended that nonnative English speaking teachers often teach the language "in text books rather than the language students need to communicate" (p. 56); therefore EFL teachers need to expand their views to find different ways of teaching or learning English.

Sharing their beliefs with teachers from other cultures enabled the CMC participants to examine their own culture. The Korean participants in this study began to try to understand their partners' views on a variety of issues, such as the habit of some Korean people of eating dog meat, infidelity, acupuncture, the Korean civil war, South Korean support for North Korea, the war between the USA and Iraq, the definition of *bribery*, collectivism and individualism, and many other sensitive issues. These kinds of issues may be dealt with in other media such as the TV, newspapers, and movies; but the CMC environment has a unique attribute in that it enabled the participants to share exactly what they wanted. Whereas other media post messages for an unknown number and variety of people, the correspondents in the one-to-one CMC activities were able to focus on the most controversial points of the issues from their own views. Jonassen (1996) asserted that EFL teachers who have limited sources of cultural information must increase their opportunities to interact with native English speakers.

Through discussion in professional areas, EFL teachers are expected not only to understand other perspectives, but also to develop self-confidence in their current level of English. After Jung had long discussions with Tarry about whether he would recommend teaching songs to elementary school students in an English classroom, she exclaimed in an interview, "I won the game!" (November 19). In the debates that used both e-mail and online chats, Tarry strongly opposed teaching songs without explaining each word, each sentence, and their meaning. Jung emphasized that songs can be taught—especially to young language learners—to reduce anxiety and raise motivation, with little explicit explanation about the language forms.

Throughout the process of persuading and defending, she believed that she had gained not only self-confidence, but also English competence. This kind of debate on

issues can stimulate authentic communication and assist language learners in developing communicative skills through arguing, persuading, or defending (Singhal, 1998). Collis (1995) also suggested that EFL teachers use CMC for the purpose of "building professional community of sharing knowledge" (p. 64) and believed that it helps teachers to engage in reflective and self-directed learning activities.

An awareness or understanding of others' beliefs or ideas may be more valuable than gaining simple cultural information on, for example, foods, historical sites, or statistical comparisons between the two countries. With an increased awareness of native speakers' values or beliefs, nonnative speakers may be able to reduce their embarrassment or frustration while engaging in conversation. According to Gonglewski (1999), successful communication depends on an understanding of how or what to say, or to whom to say it. Thus, without understanding, one will have difficulties in successful communication with people, especially those from other cultures.

Another benefit of CMC conversation between the native and nonnative speakers is that the native speakers gained a better understanding of the language learners' difficulties. Hyde (2000) advised that foreign-language teachers re-experience what it is like to be a foreign-language learner. The Korean participants gained insights into how learners are affected by the teacher's manner of response, how important the conversation climate is, how crucial encouragement from the teacher is, how much language input passed by their eyes without being comprehended, and how important it is to allow language learners to ask about anything that they do not understand through as many differing communicative opportunities as possible. To the Korean teachers, the CMC activities were instructive in that the opportunity allowed them to reconsider the students' position, to increase their awareness of students' needs, and to reposition themselves in their profession. They transferred the lessons that they learned from the CMC activities to their classes.

The aforementioned benefits suggest that teachers of EFL need to use both asynchronous and asynchronous CMC. It is valuable to use both forms because they provide teachers of EFL with opportunities to discuss what they want to share in English with native-speaking English instructors.

## Suggestions for Policy Makers

The findings of this study show that the Korean participants experienced a variety of benefits and difficulties during the process of CMC correspondence. They all wished that they had had enough time and systematical support from the government in Korea to correspond using CMC with native English teachers. It is clear from the findings that many of the benefits that they reported arose from the opportunities of interacting with native English speaking teachers. It was an effective method of self-training as language learners and language teachers. The findings suggest that teachers of EFL should be provided with continuous interaction with native English speaking teachers.

General types of governmental support in the past several decades have included school- or districtwide workshops or conferences. In some cases the teachers were given a one-month opportunity to study English. In general, however, continuous and lifelong professional development has been the individual teacher's responsibility. Teachers realize that English teachers need to develop not only linguistic, but also cultural knowledge, which requires that they invest their time and energy in continuous exposure to 'authentic' English or interaction with native speakers of English. The ideal situation might include a bank of native speakers who would be available when needed or desired. This situation, however, is rarely possible in countries where English is taught as a foreign language.

Thus, an alternative method of enabling frequent interaction with native speakers of English might be realized through CMC. The difficulties that the Korean participants experienced in this study suggest that systematic support might facilitate the process of professional development and addressing teacher-development needs. Systematic support might include providing them with enough time for CMC activities and native speakers of English who are available to chat with them. The Korean participants managed to find time for e-chatting in the evening or on the weekend. Giving teachers enough time and formally providing a circle of e-chatters would facilitate their CMC activities. Policy makers should begin creating and promoting interactive CMC environments for teachers' professional development.

## Suggestions for Further Studies

As I reflected on the findings regarding the Korean participants' experiences of CMC correspondence with the native speakers, I had concerns and questions that emerged during and after the research.

First, the Korean participants emphasized that one of the main reasons that they participated was to improve their English proficiency, and they said that they gained self-confidence, the motivation to interact actively with their native-speaking partners, and the willingness to communicate. All of these are recognized as essential factors in achieving high language proficiency. One area that I would like to investigate further is whether or not their perceived improvement in English can be transferred to face-to-face interactions. Face-to-face and CMC interactions are different in terms of the presence of a physical environment and control of pronunciation. Which linguistic or sociolinguistic aspects can be transferred?

Second, the degree of benefits and difficulties that the Korean participants and their native-speaking partners experienced while interacting was not the same. What factors made them different? It might depend on individual differences such as age, gender, and identity. It might also depend on the native-speaking partners themselves. The Korean participants' views of their partners and their relationships with themselves might be worth further investigation. Another area that needs to be investigated is how the virtual identities created during this digital forum would change if CMC was conducted with other native-speaking partners.

Third, the participants were selected as beginners in CMC by a researcher in order to gain an understanding of the whole process of CMC from the first stage. However, if researchers chose native-speaking partners from people around the world through an Internet search, it would be more natural to investigate the actual difficulties that the Korean partners experience searching for appropriate native speaking partners and their strategies for maintaining correspondence.

Fourth, after I complete my doctoral program I will return to Korea, and I hope to be able to teach university students. Although all of the participants in this study emphasized the benefits of CMC, it would also be valuable to investigate how preservice teachers in an EFL context perceive CMC experiences with native-speaking partners.

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# APPENDIX A

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH

## Appendix A

## Sample Interview Questions for Research

1. Have you had any chat or e-mail with foreigners before this project?
   - (If no) Have you ever wanted to do chat/e-mail with foreigners before this project? Why?
   - (If yes) What was that like?
     - Tell me any story about it.
     - Tell me more about any issues that make it easy or difficult during chat/e-mail exchange
     - What did you anticipate our experience would be like?
     - What do you do when you have little idea how to express your opinion in chat/e-mail?
     - Tell me about any part of the conversation that you were satisfied or dissatisfied with.
     - Was there anything that surprised you?
2. Tell me about your e-mail and chat exchanges on this project.
   - How did you start e-mail and chat exchanges?
   - How did you choose the chat program that you both use together?
   - How much tome have you spent in e-mail/chat exchange for this project?
   - What exchanges have you experienced during your involvement in e-mail and chat exchanges?
   - How was that like?
   - Tell me any story about it.
   - Tell me more about any issues that make it difficult doing chat/e-mail exchange
   - Tell me something you have had expected to attain from the chat/e-mail before and during the exchange. Has your expectation been met? Has it happened?
   - Would you tell me any moment you were satisfied or dissatisfied with?
   - If you could give advice to someone beginning the chat/e-mail, what would it be?

3. Can you describe the kind of issues you talk about with your partner?
   - Were there any problems that you came up against?
   - Have you seen any benefits?
   - Are there any other examples you want to give me?
4. What have been the benefits of your experiences **as an English teacher**?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your e-mail/chat experience?
6. Do you have any suggestion regarding how to conduct my final research project in a better way?
7. Can you suggest any changes to the interview questions I have asked you?

# APPENDIX B

## SECOND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PILOT RESEARCH

**Appendix B**

**Second Interview Questions for Pilot Research**

**[April 17th, 2003]**

1. As a nonnative English teacher, when have you felt happy or unhappy?

2. What things do you think are the most important in life as an English teacher in Korea?

3. Is CMC meaningful with regard to questions number 1 and 2?
   - -(If yes) If you could identify one benefit of CMC as a nonnative speaker teacher of English, what would it be? And what would be the next one?

4. Do you have any story that surprised you?
   - (If yes) In what ways?
   - (If no) Is everything the same as you expected before you started this project?

5. Tell me a story about something that you have learned.

6. Has the experience helped you improve your English?
   - (If yes) In what ways?
   - Tell me the story
   - (If no) What could be done differently to help you?

7. What do you think of what I see? - Based on my analysis of the first interview and the electronic dialogue (several categories emerged from the data)
   - How do you come to see it that way?

8. Have your conversations changed in the last month in terms of quality and quantity from your perspective?

9. Do you have any suggestions for other English teachers who want to have CMC with English native speakers?

10. After this project, are you going to try to find another native speaker for chat or e-mail?
    - (If yes) In what way? (i.e., How will you find him/her?)
    - (If no) Why?

11. What might be the benefits of your CMC experiences **as an English teacher**?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your e-mail/chat experience?

13. Do you have any suggestions regarding how to conduct my final research project in a better way?

14. Can you suggest any changes to the interview questions I have asked you?

15. Do you have any questions regarding this project, the interviews, or anything else?

16. Is there something that you've always wanted to do, but you haven't had the chance to do as an English teacher? Why couldn't you do that?

# APPENDIX C

## E-MAIL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR NATIVE-SPEAKING TEACHERS OF EFL

## Appendix C

## E-mail Interview Questions for Native-Speaking Teachers of EFL

1. If your mail or chat conversation is not supposed to be used for research any more, would you like to keep chatting or e-mailing with your Korean English teacher partner? If yes, or no, would you please tell me the reasons?

2. If another English native speaker teacher in Korea wanted to e-mail or chat with Korean English teachers, what would you suggest for them?

3. If I understand you correctly, your understanding is that CMC is beneficial both for native and nonnative English speakers. However, the majority of both groups have not been willing to carry out CMC yet. What do you think of this phenomenon?

4. Have you found any differences between your expectations at the start of CMC with your partner and your more recent expectations? Would you tell me of which moments you have been satisfied or dissatisfied?

5. You suggested me that I create a website forum for native and nonnative speaker teachers. Would you tell me any strategies to motivate them to participate in electronic conversations?